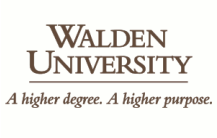

2016

Teachers' Perceptions of English Language Learners and Reading Instruction

P. Pualani Jackson
Walden University

Walden University

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Paulette Pualani Jackson

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
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2016

Abstract

Teachers' Perceptions of English Language Learners and Reading Instruction

by

Paulette Pualani Jackson

MLA, Dallas Baptist University, 1999

BS, Southwestern Assemblies of God University, 1997

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

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August 2016

Abstract

The growing population of English language learners (ELLs) in an urban school district in the southwest United States has maintained low achievement scores in the K-5 grades. Students who do not attain reading proficiency at least by the end of 3rd grade are at risk of continued academic failure through high school. Research shows that teachers' knowledge and preparedness to teach reading has an influence on student performance. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the readiness of mainstream classroom teachers to teach reading to ELLs. Guided by the sociocultural frameworks of Bruner and Vygotsky, this study explored teachers' perceptions about the adequacy of instructional resources they receive to improve reading instruction. A sample of 12 purposefully selected teachers from 10 different school districts, with at least 3 years of experience teaching ELLs, shared their responses via semistructured interviews. Data sorted through inductive and axial coding showed teachers expressed an inadequacy in preparing to teach ELLs and depended on their experience with ELLs to provide specific teaching strategies in a risk-free environment that would promote positive student outcomes. The participants' responses helped design a professional development initiative to address the need for more training specific for reading teachers of ELLs. Implications for positive social change include providing more training in reading instruction for teachers of ELLs that can result in increased ELL student reading achievement and greater academic success through high school.

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Dedication

To my husband, James Wellington Jackson, my advisor, my mentor, a lifelong friend, a steadfast leader, and a dedicated educator. I am forever grateful for your constant encouragement and belief in me and my abilities. The daily sacrifices you continue to make so that my dreams can come true are greatly appreciated. Know that “I took the shot!”

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Moreover, I appreciate my husband, James, for the constant reminder that I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. My husband is my best friend and carried me through the most difficult times when I doubted myself throughout this process. I also appreciate the rest of my family members, especially my daughter, Ayanna. She is an extraordinary, gifted, talented, and innovative teacher whose commitment and dedication to the teaching profession produce positive results. Her creativity, endless energy, as well as the positive relationships she builds with her English language learners are remarkable.

Special appreciation goes to my colleague and coaching teammate, with whom I engaged in daily conversations about the importance of building teacher capacity. I appreciate the constant reminder of our commitment to education and the mantra that there is no excuse for poor instruction.

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Section 1: The Problem

Local Problem

Spanish is the predominant spoken language among non-English speakers, especially in the western and southern regions of the United States. There are more than 4 million English language learners (ELLs) enrolled in public schools in kindergarten through twelfth grade (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2014). ELLs are often in mainstream classrooms with teachers who do not have specialized training to meet their needs. Further, researchers have contended that teachers have a greater need for training in culturally responsive pedagogy and knowledge of language development than for content knowledge in bilingual methods (Lopez, Scanlan, & Gundrum, 2013). Ballantyne, Sanderman, and Levy (2008) reported in the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (NCELA, 2006) that the enrollment of ELLs increased 47% faster than total K-12 enrollment from 1995 to 2006. According to the NCELA (2008), ELLs in the nation's K-12 student population increased 57% in 10 years.

The NCELA report also indicated that most states do not have individual ELL certification requirements for teachers. Ballantyne et al. (2008) further reported that only 29% of teachers received specific training to address the needs of ELLs, and only 26% had specific training in ELL instruction. According to the NCELA (2006) report, 57% of teachers believed that they needed more training in ELL education. The report documented a dearth of teacher preparation to serve ELLs adequately.

The continuous growth of the ELL population requires teachers to have the capacity to serve diverse classrooms. The NCES (2013) reported that one in every four public school students in the United States is Hispanic. The students who are identified as ELLs perform poorly on standardized tests and struggle to attain academic success. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, 2011) reported that, on average, Hispanic students in fourth grade scored well below their peers and continued to perform poorly in eighth grade, often scoring below the 25th percentile. This trend of low achievement on standardized tests has an adverse impact and puts many Hispanic students at a disadvantage when they enter secondary school (Craft & Slate, 2012). The national high school dropout rate for Hispanics is 14%, compared to 7% for African Americans and 5% for Whites (Aud et al., 2013).

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore teachers' perceptions about the adequacy of instructional resources they receive and to understand the practices used to build literacy for ELL students in the elementary grades. Twelve teachers from 10 different school districts were interviewed to explore the reading instruction implemented in their schools. These teachers had an average of 10 years of teaching experience particularly with ELLs in the general education classroom. Exploring the teachers' perceptions of their preparedness and knowledge of reading instruction helped in determining what is needed to improve students' reading performance (Kane, Taylor, Tyler, & Wooten, 2010; Moats, 2009). The teachers’ responses about their reading instruction and the resources available to them gave insight into designing professional development for teachers of ELLs.

Definition of the Problem

In an urban school district in a southwestern state, 64% of the student population was Hispanic, and 64,711 (41%) ELL students were enrolled in prekindergarten through Grade 12. Over half of the ELL students in the district were in the lower elementary grades (Garcia-Ricón, 2014). The district also reported a large (66.1%) population of at-risk students, including ELLs. The largest numbers of students at risk of academic failure were in the second and third grades, with the fifth grade having the greatest percentage of at-risk students (Garcia-Ricón, 2014). These ELL students represented a high proportion of those identified as having low socioeconomic status.

The NAEP (2011) showed that ELL students in the fourth grade scored well below their non-ELL counterparts. According to Hernandez (2011), students should have reading proficiency before the end of third grade, or they are 4 times at greater risk of not graduating from high school on time. Hernandez further stated that it is important to intervene when students are not reading with third-grade proficiency because reading interventions are less effective for struggling students in the upper grades. Mancilla-Martinez and Lesaux (2010) and Verdugo (2011) noted that there are other possible factors to consider in relation to the high school dropout rate, including non-English-speaking parents, poverty, underresourced schools, and low educational attainment and literacy rates among parents. Duke and Block (2012) contended that when teachers lack the ability to teach reading effectively, students suffer obstacles impeding their mastery of reading skills.

In the school district used in this study, the HS (pseudonym) feeder pattern served 6,000 students, with 75% classified as ELL and 96% of students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch. The district website further shows that only two-thirds of ELLs passed the end-of-semester exam, with need for improvement shown in reading. The students in the second and third grade from the HS feeder schools perform poorly on the annual standardized reading test. According to the 2013 data posted on the district website, only 38% of ELLs receive a passing score at or above the 40 percentile. Scores across the HS feeder continue to range low in the third through fifth grade on the annual English reading state test (Table 1).

Table 1

Percentage Passing Reading Scores for HS Feeder

Campuses in HS feeder pattern	ITBS & Logramos Grade 1	ITBS & Logramos Grade 2	STAAR English Grades 3-5
A Elementary	54.2	62.4	57.9
B Elementary	42.9	37.5	37.5
C Elementary	57.7	53.2	33.3
D Elementary	58.0	55.5	39.3
E Elementary	57.3	44.7	79.3
F Elementary	42.1	44.3	51.5
G Elementary	52.1	39.5	79.5
H Elementary	49.9	49.2	87.1
I Elementary	58.7	61.5	*

Note. Data from district school data packet, 2013-2014. ITBS = Iowa Test of Basic Skills.

The low test scores indicate that there is a problem with reading instruction particular to ELL students' achievement. The current literature on effective teaching identifies some of the resources that teachers need to improve students' reading performance. Researchers have stated, "Effective teachers are crucial to the development of diverse learners" (Garcia, Arias, Murri, & Serna, 2010, p. 135). However, teachers who serve in urban schools are often unprepared in knowledge and skills to address the challenges of teaching ELL students (Clark, Jones, Reutzel, & Andreasen, 2013; Hernandez, 2011). Researchers have indicated a relationship between a teacher's knowledge, skill, and preparedness to be productive and increases in student achievement (Garcia et al., 2010; Hiebert & Morris, 2012; Konstantopoulos & Sun, 2012; Wang, Lin, Spalding, Klecka, & Odell, 2011). It is imperative that teachers have content knowledge in subjects they teach and be equipped with research-based teaching strategies to transfer that knowledge to students (Mooi, 2010).

Clark et al. (2013) stated that nearly half the teachers in the United States are inexperienced and lack expertise in teaching the major reading components distinguished by the National Reading Panel (2000). Furthermore, teachers must be able to recognize students' learning preferences and have the ability to differentiate reading instruction in order to address what students need to achieve academic growth (Benson, 2014; Reis, McCoach, Little, Muller, & Kaniskan, 2011). Therefore, lack of teaching skills and knowledge represents a problem for teachers who work with ELL students. These teachers require ongoing professional development specific to ELLs.

Rationale

The low achievement scores and the demographics of the schools in the HS feeder pattern indicate that there is a problem with instruction, particularly in reading. Through private conversations with teachers about this topic as I was developing the idea for this study, I learned that teachers collaborated on lessons and delivered reading instruction mandated by the district. As a common practice in the HS feeder schools, individual students receive small group interventions to remediate reading deficiencies, and struggling students receive tutoring at least twice per week. Nevertheless, the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) results show that only 44% of the schools improved reading scores between the second grade ITBS and the annual STAAR test that is taken in the third grade (Table 1).

Factors contributing to the lack of improvement in reading test scores may include ill preparedness of teachers who are new to the urban school environment, lack of effective teaching strategies specific to ELLs, and lack of adequate professional development in reading instruction. Additionally, inconsistent instruction (Cheung & Slavin, 2012) and poor-quality teachers in substandard school conditions (Madrid, 2011) may adversely affect student achievement.

In this qualitative study, I attempted to explore teachers' perceptions about the adequacy of instructional resources they receive to improve reading instruction. A 3-day professional development program was created based on the results of this study. The training sessions are specific to the findings, as teachers are more likely to benefit from

training that is relevant and appropriate for their situation (McIntyre, Kyle, Chen, Munoz, & Beldon, 2010; Vanderburg & Stephens, 2010).

Definition of Terms

Differentiated instruction refers to instruction that is designed to accommodate the learning needs of students based on their learning styles, abilities, and methods of processing information. The crafted lessons lean toward the individual needs of students in order to promote students' academic growth, rather than reflecting a one-size-fits-all approach (Tomlinson & Moon, 2013).

The term *English language leaner (ELL)* is often used interchangeably with *English as a second language (ESL)* or *limited English proficiency (LEP)*. It refers to the group of students who are learning English as a second language (ESL) and have difficulty listening, speaking, reading, and writing in English. In the case of this study, those students were Spanish-speaking dominant (Roy-Campbell, 2013).

The *Iowa Test of Basic Skills (Iowa or ITBS)* is a norm-referenced test for students in kindergarten through eighth grade that measures language and basic math skills. The Spanish test, *Logramos*, is norm referenced to address the Spanish-speaking population (Hoover, Dunbar, & Frisbie, 2007).

Limited English proficiency (LEP) refers to students who are 3 through 21 years of age; are enrolled in an elementary or secondary school; were not born in the United States or speak a language other than English as a first language; and have difficulty speaking, listening to, reading, and writing in English (No Child Left Behind, 2001).

The *Sheltered Observation Instructional Protocol Model (SIOP)* was created to assist teachers in creating lesson plans that provide accommodations for ELLs based on the students' language proficiency (Short, Fidelma, & Lougit, 2012).

The *State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)* are state-mandated standardized annual tests administered to students in the third to twelfth grade. The tests measure student performance in relation to expectations defined by state curriculum standards (Texas Education Agency, 2012a).

The *Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS)* is an assessment system for ELL students in Texas public schools. TELPAS tests focus on listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Texas Education Agency, 2012)

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) refer to the state curriculum standards that students are expected to know, which are measured by the STAAR tests annually (Texas Education Agency, 2012a)

Significance of the Study

This study is significant, in that it may assist teachers in improving the quality of instruction and promoting positive outcomes in relation to student achievement (Kunter, Klusmann, Richter, Voss, & Hachfeld, 2013). In classrooms where teachers value students' cultural identities, students may be encouraged toward being college and/or career ready (Garnett, 2010; Garza & Garza, 2010; Meyer, Willse, & Villalba, 2011).

Reading instruction must include differentiation and culturally relevant pedagogy (Cummins, 2012; Garza & Garza, 2010; Leos & Saavedra, 2010; Reis et al., 2010; Valenzuela, 1999). Literacy is fundamental to all learning, and reading comprehension is

crucial (Block, Parris, Reed, Whiteley, & Cleveland, 2009) for both bilingual and monolingual students (Cummins, 2012; Giampapa, 2010). Sheng, Sheng and Anderson (2011) stated that the teacher who does not acknowledge or is uninformed about the importance of cultural differences, including those relevant to classroom management and student-teacher relationships, can hinder student achievement. Teachers who are aware of cultural differences are likely to keep their biases in check and promote tolerance and equity in teaching ELL students (Meyers, Willse, & Villalba, 2011). Additionally, teachers are more likely to accommodate ELL students effectively by adjusting pedagogical practices when they are aware of cultural differences. Sheng et al. further stated that teachers can make instructional adjustments to address the needs of students by building a positive student-teacher relationship when detailed information about a student and the student's challenges is accessible. Teachers who understand students' ability to comprehend material and who seek to promote students' reading achievement (Block et al., 2009) can give students a strong educational foundation to build successful lives. ELLs with positive self-esteem, which can come from being well-read, will have a greater opportunity to be productive contributors to a global society (Peterson, Woessmann, Hanushek, & Lastra-Anadón, 2011).

The low reading scores among ELL students in the HS feeder motivated me to explore teachers' perceptions about the adequacy of the instructional resources they receive to improve reading instruction. An aspect of quality education is teachers' sensitivity to cultural factors (Valenzuela, 1999) and understanding of the relationship between students' well-being and academic performance (Giampapa, 2010; Meyers,

Willse, & Villalba, 2011; Rubie, Townsend, & Moore, 2004). I gathered data through interviews with 12 purposefully selected teachers about their perceptions of the adequacy of the instructional resources they received to improve teaching practices. The information helped me to design a professional development program that may have a positive effect on student achievement (Li, 2013; Mooi, 2010).

Research Question

The research question in this qualitative study was the following: What are teachers' perceptions about the adequacy of the instructional resources they receive to improve reading instruction?

An understanding of teachers' perceptions of reading instruction may contribute to informing best practices to improve reading instruction. Wang et al. (2011) stated, "Quality teaching from a cognitive resource perspective is related to the knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and dispositions teachers bring into the profession" (p. 331). It is necessary to explore teachers' knowledge and preparedness to teach reading and the instructional resources they perceive as necessary to be effective.

Review of the Literature

Theoretical Framework

Bruner (1960) and Vygotsky (1978) contended that students should be free to discover their learning and that students benefit from a peer or teacher who can assist them in their learning experience. Children learn and recall information best when they can make sense of their learning by making personal connections. They can interpret the

learning event based on their prior knowledge or cultural life experiences and make it meaningful to acquire new knowledge.

Bruner described the acquisition of knowledge as a building block to further knowledge acquisition. He argued that students should have pleasurable learning encounters and not see education as a punishment. When students do not know something that the teacher expects of them, they may feel inferior (Garza & Garza, 2010). Because of the delicate self-esteem of ELLs, it is important for teachers to be mindful of students' need to have positive learning experiences that convey a sense of belonging (Lopez, 2010). Teachers need to create a classroom environment that is a safe arena in which to perform the risk-taking task of learning to read.

Bruner (1960) described education as a process in which the teacher provides an avenue toward discovery and greater learning. He contended that students could learn outside of any predetermined stage or prescribed age. Bruner found that extended learning can come from interacting with someone who has a greater understanding of a concept and who will assist students in developing their understanding. Scaffolding a learning experience (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976) is similar to Vygotsky's use of the zone of proximal development (ZPD). Scaffolding can be provided by peer tutoring and is important for elementary students, especially English language learners (Ainsworth, Ortlieb, Cheek, Pate, & Fetters, 2012).

Vygotsky (1978) described the teacher acting as a facilitator who provides a scaffolding learning experience for the student, positing that students learn best through the use of language and social interaction. Suggesting that culture is in everyone, he

argued that understanding and communication comes through a cultural lens. Vygotsky stressed the importance of sociocultural or cultural knowledge. Children learn best as social beings, Vygotsky asserted, through interaction with others. He observed that students learn new concepts based on their cultural background.

In this project study, the works of Bruner (1960) and Vygotsky (1978) framed my thinking about the reading strategies used in classrooms with ELL students. In collecting data through interviews with teachers of ELLs, I considered the teachers' cultural backgrounds, teaching experiences, and cultural understanding of their students, with the understanding that people are more likely to grasp an idea with which they have some cultural familiarity (Whitacre, Diaz, & Esquierdo, 2013).

Teaching Practice

The literature shows that teacher effectiveness can have a positive influence on student performance (Clark et al., 2013; Hiebert & Morris, 2012). Noting low achievement scores among ELLs, I sought to conduct a literature review that could inform teaching practices to increase reading instruction (Crosson & Lesaux, 2010; Geva & Farnia, 2012; Sonnenschein, Stapleton, & Benson, 2010). The current literature on effective instruction indicates what teachers may need to improve student performance through targeted professional development (Leos & Saavedra, 2010). The relevant literature focused on reading instruction and the training that teachers need in order to promote academic achievement among ELL students.

The principal research databases I used to find peer-reviewed articles were Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC), Education Search Complete,

ProQuest, SAGE, and EBSCO. I used Google Scholar and Amazon to find scholarly books on my topic. The search key terms used were *English language learners and reading comprehension, teacher effectiveness, achievement gap, language minorities, limited English Hispanics, learning barriers*, and *Latinos.*

The National Literacy Panel (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHD], 2000) was formed to conduct a comprehensive review of experimental research to answer questions particular to ELL and literacy (August, McCardle, & Shanahan, 2014). Members of the panel found that teachers' preparation and approach to reading instruction mattered (Vadasy & Sanders, 2010) and that early phonics-based interventions benefited language minority students. Calderón, Slavin, and Sánchez (2011) supported the efficacy of teachers' preparation and approach and the quality of systematic reading instruction (Moats, 2009; Stuebing, Barth, Cirino, Francis, & Fletcher, 2008). Often, strategies learned in teacher preparation courses to address the literacy needs of ELL students are not used when teachers enter the classroom. Preservice teachers observed in the classroom used instructional strategies mandated by the school district, or by the school principal and the class mentor (Whitacre, Diaz, & Esquierdo, 2013). These student-teachers do field experience as classroom observers during the latter part of their teaching preparation, rather than earlier in the training cycle, when field experience is crucial. Teachers need more opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills in an authentic classroom environment. Whitacre et al. (2013) stated that the increase in Hispanic students in mainstream classrooms indicates a need to equip preservice and practicing teachers to provide effective instruction specific to ELLs.

Further, the lack of longitudinal studies to determine the needs of ELLs developing reading skills in a second language puts Hispanic students at a disadvantage.

Alamillo, Padilla, and Arenas (2011) conducted a study in California where 34% of the students were English language learners and found that teachers need knowledge specific to teaching ELLs. The study indicated that teachers felt that they were ill prepared and believed that they had received training in methods that were not useful to meet the challenges of ELLs. However, it is possible that teachers may not have seen the usefulness of their training because the reasons for the use and effectiveness of the strategies were unclear. Alamillo et al. suggested that teacher educators redefine teacher preparation programs with a clearly articulated focus on ELLs. These programs must include multiculturalism, particularly in relation to teachers' ability to form relationships with students and their families (Hughes, Wu, Kwok, Villarreal, & Johnson, 2012). In addition, teachers must have an understanding of language acquisition and the mechanics of language, as well as ELL teaching strategies, to make a difference in Hispanic student achievement (Chung, 2012; Good, Masewicz, & Vogel, 2010).

The education policy in Texas mandates that districts provide bilingual or ESL programs for students who are not English proficient. The design of the program must address the affective, linguistic, and cognitive needs of each student (State of Texas, 19 TAC §89.1210). Enrollment decisions can be subjective, relying on students' functional language skills rather than students' academic language proficiency in English (Geva & Farnia, 2012). Parents can deny bilingual services and have the option to enroll their children in English-only classrooms (Borden, 2014). Huerta (2010) found that the denial

of bilingual services was detrimental to students who were in the early stages of language development. Students who grapple with an English-specific curriculum without a solid foundation in their mother tongue will continue to struggle through the upper grades (Borden, 2014; Gutierrez, Zepeda, & Castro, 2010). Edwards (2014) stated that teachers must have some knowledge of language acquisition and the process of language development in order to be effective.

Teacher Training Regarding English Language Learners

Teachers need training on the academic and social behaviors that are particular to ELL students, as well as on how to differentiate instruction based on students' language acquisition and reading skills. Cheatham, Jimenez-Silva, Wodrich, and Kasai (2013) stated that teachers may make presumptions about ELLs that are biased by media or stereotypes and may therefore teach from a deficit perspective and suppose a negative work ethic (Madrid, 2011). Teachers' classroom management as a whole, including student-teacher relationships and instructional behavior, reveals expectations and belief systems, whether these are demonstrated in differential treatment in waiting for ample time for low achievers to respond, or in excessively scaffolding students and diminishing learning opportunities (Valenzuela, 1999). Teachers' misconceptions and lack of understanding of ELL students can lead to overrepresentation of ELLs among referrals to special education (Fien et al., 2011; Huerta, 2010). Therefore, it is important for teachers to provide effective reading instruction that is beneficial to both English-only speakers and ELL students (Gutierrez et al., 2010). Fien et al. (2011) stated that more than 60% of ELLs received English instruction in mainstream classrooms with some support in their

primary language. They suggested that a multitier approach could increase reading achievement and decrease the number of ELLs who are misidentified and referred to receive special services. Van den Broek, Kendeou, Lousberg, and Visser (2011) reported that systematic, direct, and explicit instruction can improve student achievement in early reading instruction. The instruction must include building oral language proficiency. ELL students with poor oral language proficiency will struggle with reading comprehension (Chen, Geva, & Schwartz, 2012; Geva & Farnia, 2012). The disparity in academic achievement between native English speakers and ELLs has been documented, especially in reading comprehension (Lipka & Siegel, 2012).

Researchers van den Broek et al. (2011) explained that the cognitive process of reading comprehension requires a reader to decode the written passage and visualize the content while reading. Early reading instruction that is presented explicitly can improve reading comprehension when various strategies are used to increase students' interaction with the text through questioning while reading (Ainsworth et al., 2012; Faust, 2011; Fien et al., 2011). Additionally, Block et al. (2009) stated that students must learn how to use the processes of comprehension, which include summarizing, identifying the central idea, and remembering important details while they are reading. Block et al. stated that 40% of fourth graders could not comprehend grade-level reading material after receiving several years of traditional instruction. They identified traditional teaching as lessons from the prescribed curriculum (Ainsworth et al., 2012) using basal readers for students to read independently. Scripted instruction and basal readers are most often used in classrooms

as students use workbooks to practice a particular skill or strategy following the teacher's instruction.

Mancilla-Martinez and Lesaux (2010) stated that students must be able to decode words and understand the meaning of phrases. They conducted a longitudinal study in which they investigated factors that may influence the process of reading comprehension in word reading and vocabulary skills among Spanish-speaking struggling readers. It is students' ability to widen their vocabulary and accomplish language and literacy skills that will determine much of their academic success (Crevecoeur, Coyne, & McCoach, 2014; Proctor et al., 2011). Vocabulary knowledge has a direct effect on reading comprehension, especially in reading expository text (Huerta, 2010; Lesaux, Keiffer, Kelley, & Harris, 2014; Nagy & Townsend, 2012). Students must know the meaning of 90%-95% of the vocabulary in a text in order to comprehend it. Students' comprehension is "affected by the socio-cultural environment and the quality of reading instruction" (Yildirim, Yildiz & Ates, 2011, p. 1541).

There are various reading strategies that teachers know to employ (Faust, 2011; Sargent, Smith, Hill, Morrison, & Burges, 2010). More often, teachers tend to use instructional practices in the way in which they were taught, even after being exposed to research-based strategies that dispel misconceptions regarding instruction (Barnyak & Paquette, 2010). Block et al. (2009) determined that the use of basal readers and workbook practice could be a less efficient instructional practice for student achievement. However, there was greater success with students who were able to build on concepts by reading books on a single topic, rather than reading short stories from a basal reader on

various topics. These topics frequently changed and lacked coherence or connection for students (Dewitz, Jones, & Leahy, 2009). Students increase their reading comprehension when reading trade books that they choose. Additionally, students are motivated to learn more when given autonomy to select their reading material (DeNaeghel & Van Keer, 2013).

Barriers for English Language Learners

There are 6.1 million Hispanic children under the age of 18 in the United States who live in poverty (Cheung & Slavin, 2012). These students come from poverty-stricken neighborhoods (Aud et al., 2013) much like the area surrounding the HS feeder schools in this study. These underserved students (Pease-Alvarez, Samway, & Cifka-Herrera, 2010) are likely to have novice teachers who are ill equipped to meet the challenges of teaching ELLs (Clark, Jones, Reutzel, & Andreasen, 2013; Hernandez, 2011; Mancilla-Martinex & Lesaux, 2010). Students who are adversely affected by poverty and are impacted by sustained stressors due to poverty require strategies to meet the needs of economically disadvantaged students (Jensen, 2009).

Students from low-income households often have parents with poor educational backgrounds (Becerra, 2012; Cavazos et al., 2010). These children often exhibit negative social behaviors as they attempt to assimilate into a new school environment. Often, their parents experience isolation and lack of empowerment to assist their children in school. Parents may believe that teachers need more training to value the Hispanic culture and communicate more effectively with their students and the students' families (Garza & Garza, 2010). Furthermore, Lopez (2011) indicated that schools that valued students'

social and cultural knowledge, involved parents, and acknowledged their heritage were found to increase student achievement. Educators must understand the influence of culture on the identity of a child and the impact culture has on learning outcomes (Austin, Willett, Gebhard, & Láo-Montes, 2010; Martínez-Roldán & Heineke, 2011).

According to Good, Masewicz, and Vogel (2010), parents have concerns about the challenges that Hispanic children encounter in school. These concerns raise feelings of insecurity and emotional stress in adapting to an American or mainstream school culture, a culture built on individualism and competitiveness. In the Hispanic culture, building relationships, more than language, is an important aspect of communication (Cavazos et al., 2010; Garza & Garza, 2010). Hughes et al. (2012) suggested the importance of relationship building and reported a positive effect on reading achievement when students experience warm and low-conflict teacher-student relationships in the early grades. The role of culture is integrated into instructional practices, along with content knowledge, to impact student achievement for a long-term effect (Chen, Geva, & Schwartz, 2012; Garza & Garza, 2010).

Stronge, Ward, and Grant (2011) examined teaching practices and behaviors that had a positive effect on student reading achievement. In their study, 15 areas of teacher effectiveness were measured. Two prominent differences between more competent and less effective teachers were classroom management and personal qualities. Teachers who were able to convey their caring for individual students and who used strong communication skills were effective in promoting student achievement. There was little difference in teachers' instructional delivery and assessments. Stronge et al. proposed that

effective teachers have "some particular set of attitudes, approaches, strategies, or connections with students" (p. 349). It was their recommendation to explore practical instruction further that motivated this study.

Implications

According to research the teacher's ability to produce positive student outcomes through effective instruction is the viable ingredient to affect student learning (Kunter et al., 2013; Stronge, Ward, & Grant, 2011). Consistent low reading scores in the elementary schools within the HS feeder pattern are an indication there is a problem with adequate instruction. Test scores show the greatest need for improvement is in reading comprehension in kindergarten through second grades. These low reading scores continue through the upper grades when students take the state mandatory STAAR test. Possible issues contributing to this problem may include inconsistent collaboration in a professional learning community, or ineffective teaching strategies specific to ELL students (Sheng, Sheng, & Anderson, 2011).

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the research question: What are teachers' perceptions about the adequacy of instructional resources they receive to improve reading instruction? It is necessary to examine the teacher's knowledge and readiness to teach reading as research shows teacher effectiveness has an influence on student performance (Clark et al., 2013). The social change of having teachers understand the importance of sociocultural pedagogy and reading instruction will have a positive impact on the students served by closing the achievement gap that currently exist between ELLs and mainstream students.

Summary

Spanish-speakers are the most prominent group of ELL students in 44 states with Texas having the second largest population (US Digest, NCES, 2013). The change in classroom demographics requires teachers to become better equipped to serve the ELL population in mainstream classrooms. The population growth of ELLs continues to increase each year (Samson & Collins, 2012). Few states have special training or certification requirements for teachers of ELLs. Ballantyne et al. reported there is a lack of teacher preparedness to serve the ELL population adequately in today's schools.

Further, ELLs perform poorly on standardized tests and struggle to attain academic success throughout high school. Scores are low for the Hispanic students who receive all of their instruction in English in mainstream classrooms. Parents from predominately Spanish-speaking homes can deny bilingual services provided by the school and elect to have their child in English-only instruction in all content areas. However, research has shown students who do not have a strong foundation in their first language will often struggle to in the newly learned second language. It is in the English-only classrooms that the students' reading scores are low on the annual state exam (District date, 2013). Informal conversation with various campus instructional coaches from the feeder schools in this study convey concerns about the continuous low reading scores in the lower grades and what impact it will have on the students' progress in the upper elementary grades.

Researchers indicate there is a relationship between student achievement and the teachers' knowledge, skill and preparedness to be productive (Garcia, Arias, Murri, &

Serna, 2010). It is imperative that teachers be highly qualified and knowledgeable in subjects they teach and are equipped with research-based teaching strategies to transfer that knowledge to students (Mooi, 2010). Clark et al. (2013) stated nearly half the teachers in the United States are inexperienced and lack the expertise in teaching the major reading components to ELL students. Teachers in the urban school environment often require active professional development specific to reading instruction for ELLs (Pease-Alvarez, Samway, Cifka-Herrera, 2010). More importantly, teachers must be trained to be culturally responsive when teaching ELLs as well as have expertise in content and knowledge of oral language proficiency. When teachers are aware of cultural differences among ELLs, they are more likely to accommodate the academic needs of the students (de Jong, Harper, & Coady, 2013).

According to Good, Masewicz, and Vogel (2010), parents have concerns about the challenges Hispanic children encounter in school. These concerns raise feelings of insecurity and emotional stress in adapting to the mainstream culture. Becerra (2012) stated that parents believe teachers lack the understanding of how to engage ELLs in the learning process and label their children as behavior problems. Lopez (2011) indicated schools that value students' social and cultural knowledge, involved parents and acknowledged their heritage, were found to increase student achievement.

Hughes et al. (2012) suggested the importance of relationship building and reported a positive effect in reading achievement when students experience the warmth and low-conflict of teacher-student relationships in the early grades. Stronge, Ward, and Grant (2011) examined the teaching practices and behaviors that had a positive effect on

student reading achievement and found effective teachers have “particular set of attitudes, approaches, strategies, or connections with students” (p. 349). In this project study, it was necessary to explore the teachers’ knowledge and readiness to teach reading because research shows teacher effectiveness has an influence on student performance (Clark et al., 2013).

In Section 2, I detail the methodology used in this qualitative study. Twelve purposeful selected teachers were invited to participate in a private interview lasting approximately 45 minutes. The participants had teaching experiences that range from 4 to 30 years, with a mean of 10.8 years of experience. The semistructured interview questions were designed to explore the research question: What are teachers’ perceptions about the adequacy of instructional resources they receive to improve reading instruction? The outcome of the collected data was analyzed to determine major themes to inform the creation of a three-day professional development for teachers of ELLs. The staff training will include practices on differentiation and socio-cultural instruction. Research has shown that when teachers have “professional development, time, and support” (Firmender, Reis, & Sweeny, 2013) they are more likely to implement the skills and strategies learned. Teachers who can increase student reading ability, as well as valued students' cultural identity, will more likely assist their students to have a strong education foundation to build successful lives.

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

This qualitative study explored teachers' perceptions about the adequacy of the instructional resources they receive to improve reading instruction. According to de Jong, Harper and Coady (2013), ELL students are often with teachers who are ill-prepared to address the needs of ELL students in mainstream classrooms. Further, persistent low achievement scores among ELL students, compared to native speakers of English, require more research on teacher training to bridge the achievement gap effectively. The district used in this study published public data that showed that the majority of students within the HS feeder pattern in kindergarten through second grade scored as low as in the 38th to 49th percentile in reading on the annual standardized test. These scores showed that only 44% of the schools in the HS feeder improve performance when taking the annual state standardized test in third through fifth grade (Table 1). The ITBS test results show that these students have particular difficulty in reading comprehension. Data were collected through interviews with 12 teachers with at least 3 years of teaching experience to understand teachers' perceptions of their knowledge and preparedness to teach reading to ELLs.

Research Design

The choice of research design is mainly based on the research questions that a researcher is attempting to answer (Yin, 2014). The study used in this inquiry was intended to provide an understanding of teachers' perceptions of their knowledge and preparedness to teach reading to ELLs. Teachers were asked to explain the instructional

resources they perceived as helping to improve reading instruction at schools with a high population of ELLs. A qualitative study design was appropriate for this study because the boundaries between the phenomenon of students' poor reading achievement and the context of reading instructional strategies implemented were distinct (Merriam, 2009). Boundaries are defined "in terms of time, place, or some physical boundaries" (Creswell, 2012, p. 465). As a researcher, I wanted to know the teachers' perceptions of reading instruction, as "researchers are interested in insight, discovery, and interpretation rather than hypothesis testing" (Merriam, 2009, p. 43). A qualitative design that allowed participants to share their perceptions in a descriptive narrative was chosen for this study.

Participants

According to Creswell (2009), the participants in a qualitative study should be purposefully selected and be the best resources available. Another author stated that the size of the sample depends on the purpose of the study (Merriam, 2009). It was anticipated that the teachers in this study would be qualified and best able to inform this study in answering the research question (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010). I expected that participants would be able to assist me as the researcher in understanding the problem and responding to the research question. Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006) stated that an adequate sample size is not often clearly determined in a qualitative study. Their research showed that no new themes were found after 12 individual interviews and that although there are "no practical guidelines for estimating sample size for purposively sampled interviews" (p. 60), 12 interviews were sufficient.

I accessed participants from a list of my professional colleagues. The teachers were former colleagues with whom I had previous working relationships or professional associations. I did not have any supervisory responsibilities involving any of the participants. My relationships with the participants were the result of professional association; respect allowed for open and honest data collection. To contact possible participants, I used private messaging on social media (Baltar & Brunet, 2012) and followed up with e-mails to explain the study to potential volunteers. There was no attempt to collect data or recruit any volunteers until after approval was granted by the Institutional Review Board (#10-06-15-0038380) at Walden University.

Twelve teachers were purposefully selected to participate in one-to-one interviews lasting approximately 45 minutes each. The selection criteria were for reading teachers who had at least 3 years of teaching experience with ELL students. Participants who met the criteria and who agreed to participate were contacted by e-mail with an explanation of the research purpose in an informed consent document. Participants were able to sign the consent form using an electronic signature and returned the document to me through e-mail. One person signed the consent form and agreed to the interview but then canceled her interview due to a family emergency. After several rescheduling attempts, I replaced that participant with someone from the list of respondents, sent her consent form, and conducted that interview by phone at her request. The signed consent forms were downloaded and saved on a flash drive and deleted from the university e-mail system. The participants were from 12 separate schools and 10 different school districts, two of which were charter schools and one of which was a private school. All participants

were women. I did not purposefully apply gender criteria, and I invited a few male teachers to participate, but they did not meet all of the requirements. Three participants were Hispanic, two were African American, six were White, and one was multiracial. Ethnicity is mentioned as an element of the demographics of the participants and did not appear to influence the data collected (Appendix C).

A consent form stated that participation was voluntary and without prejudice if teachers chose not to participate or to leave the study at any time, in addition to assuring that participants would be protected from harm. Teachers were initially asked to agree to a 60-minute audiotaped interview (Appendix B). The form also asked participants to spend an additional 15 minutes viewing the transcripts within 10 days following the interview in order to ensure that I captured the intended information shared in the interview.

Each participant received the consent form by e-mail before the interview with assurance of confidentiality. Participants were given pseudonyms as identifiers to keep track of the interviews and to allow for a smooth descriptive narrative. The consent form stated that all correspondence conducted through e-mail and all raw data collected in this study would be stored on a password-protected computer to which only I would have access. The computer and electronic flash drive were locked in a cabinet when not in use. There was no remuneration for participation or negative consequences if teachers chose not to participate or to withdraw from the study.

Data Collection

In this study, I was interested in how people interpreted and understood the meaning of their experiences. The qualitative study paradigm was selected to explore and understand teachers' perceptions of their instructional practices as reading teachers in an ELL environment. The research question was the following: What are teachers' perceptions about the adequacy of instructional resources they receive to improve reading instruction?

I designed six interview questions based on the literature review to target the data using a systematic method (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010). While composing the questions, I interviewed a colleague to check for any ambiguity in their design. Suggested edits and revisions were made to simplify the questions and improve clarity. I memorized the interview questions to facilitate a natural flow during the actual interviews, in order to put the participants at ease (Creswell, 2012). Each participant was asked the same six questions (Appendix B), but participants could have different probing follow-up questions to clarify or to extend their responses.

I collected data in one-on-one interviews with 12 certified elementary reading teachers from 10 different school districts. I met seven teachers at a public library, two preferred an interview at their home, and three interviews were conducted by phone due to travel distance (Creswell, 2012). Each interviewed lasted approximately 37 to 45 minutes. The interviews were audio recorded with the participants' consent using a digital voice recorder. Merriam (2009) recommended taking copious notes with comments during an interview to understand further the meaning of the respondent's

answers. During the data gathering process, I wrote keywords that were repeated during the interview as a guide to topics that might need further exploration. Whenever these keywords occurred during the interviews, I wrote them in my field notes. I notated the same keywords before hearing them again while I transcribed the interviews and again while reading the full transcripts several times in their entirety. A journal was kept to record reflections immediately following each interview to help monitor or clarify any research and personal bias.

I examined the transcripts and my field notes for keywords while searching for themes (Creswell, 2012; Stake, 2010). The keywords were coded in categories by interview question on a matrix to get another view of the data. The subcategories mentioned that answer the research question were reduced to select major themes. Participants were e-mailed a copy of the research findings and asked to reply in 5 days with any comments or corrections; in the absence of a reply, I assumed that the transcripts and responses were accurately interpreted (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Merriam, 2009). During the member checking process, none of the participants found any discrepancies or had anything to add to the initial interview.

A system for keeping track of the data was established using both hard copy and disk storage. The data will be secured in a locked cabinet for 5 years. Paper documents (transcripts, drafts, and field notes) were kept in a three-ring binder with index dividers for easy and frequent access to all raw data. After each participant had verified the accuracy of the transcripts, the audio recordings were erased. All confidential information has been password protected on my personal laptop and kept at my home. Raw data and

the identity of participants have been kept confidential. The entire process of recruiting, interviewing, transcribing, triangulating, and member checking took place from October 2015 to January 2016. The time of year was a factor in the participants' availability, given end-of-semester responsibilities, family obligations, and the holiday season. All of the participants had an interest in the final results and will receive an executive summary of the completed project.

Data Analysis

Analyzing the data early in the process helped to guide the study as themes began to arise from the information collected in each interview. Merriam (2009) stated that it is vital that a system for organizing and managing data be well thought out before information gathering begins. I created interview questions informed by the literature review that would best address the research question: What are teachers' perceptions about the adequacy of instructional resources they receive to improve reading instruction?

The transcripts from each audiotaped interview were read through in their entirety several times to determine possible categories or themes. The topics were coded to identify groups from the units of data collected from the participants' responses to determine any meaningful patterns or themes (Yin, 2014). Keywords or concepts aligned with the literature were coded to identify topics without the assistance of computer software. According to Yin (2014), computer software is only used as an aid; it is the researcher who identifies the patterns from the text collected and ascribes possible meanings to label what the respondents may have in common. After marking multiple

codes, I made a matrix of keywords and concepts that could be grouped together that had been repeated most frequently by participants.

Coding and notating the data to construct a detailed descriptive analysis are necessary as themes emerge from the data (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010). After each interview, the process of rereading the entire transcript brought new insight regarding the perceptions of the participants. New themes required reassessing codes or categorizing the data. Some familiar categories were anticipated, based on the literature review, concerning the teachers' perceptions of their knowledge and preparedness to teach English reading and of the instructional resources they perceived as necessary to improve teaching.

Data Analysis Results

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the research question: What are teachers' perceptions about the adequacy of instructional resources they receive to improve reading instruction? Twelve teachers from 10 different school districts were interviewed to explore their perceptions of professional trainings they received to teach reading to ELL students. Data were collected to gain insight on the teachers' teaching practices to further understand the nature of the professional development they received.

Training Resources

Twenty-five percent of the teachers had taken preservice college courses and stated that education classes did not adequately prepare them to meet the unique needs of ELL students. Sara graduated with teaching credentials from another state; while seeking a teaching position, she was asked if she could teach ESL. She said, "Sure, what's ESL?"

Those participants holding a standard teaching certification believed the best preparation to teach ELL students was embedded within their teaching practice through in-service professional development. Reading specialist Alexis stated, “I did the extensive training beforehand, and of course preparing to take the ESL test itself. So anything that I got for ESL training came from my district. None of this was in my undergraduate classes.”

In Texas, TELPAS training is mandatory to conduct an assessment of students’ language acquisition progress using an English language proficiency assessment. Teachers must be able to assess the listening, speaking, reading, and writing of all students and rate the students’ growth in English ranging from beginner to advanced-high proficiency. Erika, who taught first grade in a small urban district, stated, “I’ve had lots of training from the district. The TELPAS training and the one with the charts [SIOP] were the ones the district always gave us.”

Because the participants represented 10 different districts, perceptions of the quality and quantity of professional development varied according to district. Ten of the teachers were from urban school districts and had more opportunities for professional development on teaching reading in general. These teachers also had Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) training and mentioned it as a proper training, but not a practical training for teachers of younger children in the primary grades. Sara, a veteran teacher of 32 years, commented on her experience with the SIOP model, stating, “It’s great in theory and it’s a good idea to bring into the planning process, but as far as implementing that strict model, it’s not practical.” She explained further, “The reality of this model to plan for the whole day is not realistic.” Sara then added that she had just

enrolled in an online course through her district that used the SIOP model for younger children and looked forward to seeing how it would help her kindergarten ELL students.

A teacher for gifted and talented students made typical responses that seemed to reflect the standard practices in professional development. As a teacher for gifted and talented students, Crystal stated, "I had a lot of training in my district that helped with total participation techniques in getting all of the students involved and engaged, so you can see where they are and then move on from there." However, those teachers from a charter school and those who taught in small suburban school districts appeared to have fewer opportunities for training in relation to ELLs. Donna, a kindergarten teacher, stated, "I just do what I know to do based on what I've done in the past, but I don't know if that's the right way to do it." Overall, the teachers commented positively on the only state-required annual training (TELPAS) but believed that it was also necessary for teachers to continue to search for ways to improve instruction by attending workshops and professional development specific to ELLs.

Instructional Resources

The interview questions were created to elicit the teachers' responses about instructional resources they used in their classrooms. As some topics overlapped during data analysis, the common themes identified were: a required safe classroom environment, cultural sensitivity, and building positive relationships; the necessity to develop oral language proficiency and academic vocabulary; and the need for differentiated instruction and the frequent use of technology to provide images and to help build background knowledge.

Theme 1: Safe Classroom Environment

The unanimous response to an optimal learning environment was that it needed to be warm, welcoming, and safe. All of the teachers used the term risk-free. Every teacher recommended building relationships and assuring the students that they were in a safe learning environment. Mia, a kindergarten teacher who also speaks English as a second language, stated, "I try to build relationships with them for them to open up at the beginning, especially in kindergarten. It is important that we build a foundation and for them to feel good about school." All of the teachers expressed compassion for the students and stressed the importance of having a positive relationship that would allow students to feel comfortable in a learning environment. Teachers believed it was essential to build the students self-confidence and to let them know they were safe from ridicule and harm.

Sixty-six percent of the teachers were ELLs as children and gave a perspective of learning a new language as well as adapting to a new culture. Alexis left Germany as a child and entered elementary school in the United States. She said, "It helps to have somebody who is trained and knowledgeable about what the specific needs are for ELL students. They are very confused and overwhelmed by the whole cultural shock and the whole issue." All of the teachers commented on the need to address the confusion and fear the students experience when first entering the school system, especially in kindergarten and first grade. Teachers in the upper elementary grades also shared the need to have patience and showed compassion for the ELL students.

Theme 2: Oral Language Development

Overall, the teachers believed the students needed to be encouraged to talk both socially (recess or lunch) and during class work. Although the students hesitate to speak, it is imperative to allow students to speak often to practice their oral language development. Twenty-five percent of the teachers used projects to allow the students to exhibit their knowledge with more than the traditional formative assessments of paper and pencil tests. These teachers used discussion opportunities and close reading of high-interest trade books that would allow the students the opportunity to have open discussions that did not require a specific correct answer.

To help develop language skills, 42% of the teachers provided students with sentence stems to help start conversations that required complete sentences. Along with sentence stems, all of the teachers used graphic organizers as a visual aid to help focus students' thinking so that they can communicate orally assisted by the graphic organizer. Teachers used graphic organizers to assist students with a visual aid in breaking down the primary focus of whatever was in a lesson into sections. Morgan stated her reasons for using graphic organizers, "It helps kids frame what it is they need to think about before they have to discuss it and stay on track while thinking about how to verbalize what's in front of them." All teachers in every grade level used the graphic organizers with pictures as a visual representation to teach a concept. These teachers commented that the students are smart and need to have every opportunity to practice speaking in an unintimidating environment, and graphic organizers help students participate more during class.

Students often spoke English at school and Spanish at home and did not have the academic support at home when English is limited. The insufficient help at home with homework, or busy parents trying to survive in their new environment, left students to find help at school. Erika, a first-grade bilingual teacher, stated, "They need phonics, but our district won't let us teach phonics. They think students will get confused, but they are smart, and they can get it." Forty-two percent of the teachers said teaching phonics was important, and the bilingual teachers were empathic about the impact of phonics on oral language development. Erika said, "They need to know how to say the sounds and that in English it sometimes changes." She thought it unfortunate that her district was not a supporter of phonics for ELL students when she believed it would help the students.

Theme 3: Vocabulary

Kathy, a veteran teacher with experience teaching in all elementary grades, noted students lack real world experiences. They are unable to relate to nonfiction materials and the vocabulary of basic concepts. She stated, "Lots of ELLs aren't fluent in their first language and aren't fluent in their second language, English. It really hurts them, especially in the academic language. They aren't able to know basic words in either language." As a teacher of gifted and talented students, she stated the ELLs in her class were bright and often influenced by the new cultural environment expressed in their language. She explained, "If it's not street talk or conversation they may not even know words like curb, roof, ceiling, words that are everyday vocabulary. They lack the ability for proper expression, things that would help them with their reading." She further stated the home environment of many of her students posed a disadvantage for the students to

acquire academic language as well, “The conversation just isn’t there at home to build real world experiences and vocabulary. Not having the background knowledge to build on hurts them. A lot of students are coming into school without a foundation.”

Julia voiced similar experiences as a kindergarten teacher in a charter school with 19 students; 4 Hispanic, 15 African American, and one White. She spoke of the class as a “hard environment, street kids, very intelligent without resources.” Her perception is that the Hispanic children have little opportunity to hear Spanish spoken correctly at home so they lack a foundation or language development in either English or Spanish and have a bantam of vocabulary. She stated, with a strong Spanish accent, “If at home where they could also have their reinforcements of their native language in Spanish that would be great help for them. So I think they use even at home English with their siblings.” Julia is an ELL as well and spoke of her concern for her students language and cultural influences, “They watch TV in English and they are getting immersed in the English culture and don’t have the support of Spanish at home. It’s not enriched language experience at home.” She expressed her concern that if the children are not grounded in their mother tongue then they will not do well in acquiring English as a second language. She stated, “That’s why both languages grow slow. Even when they speak with their siblings it is very basic and not rich vocabulary so then you have two basic languages just to get by.” She believed it was not just the Hispanic students in her class that struggled with language development and stated, “They use a word they have adopted. The word they make up that they keep saying that thingy. And then they point to a lot pictures and that’s how they communicate.”

All of the teachers mentioned vocabulary building as a primary focus of their daily instruction. The vocabulary lessons ranged from common ordinary words, such as roof or ceiling, to more academic words. All of the teachers commented on the multiple layers of language proficiency that can exist in a classroom.

Theme 4: Technology

The teachers were clear on the indispensable use of technology in the classroom for the visual support needed to expose their students to build background knowledge. Computer-aided instruction, iPads, or electronic readers with books were deemed invaluable in an ELL class. Morgan, a fifth grade teacher, stated, "Technology can be a great help to expose them to background knowledge. They can have an iPad at their desk while you're instructing the whole class to use to support their learning." The teachers with smartboards and electronic data keeping systems in the classroom felt particularly fortunate.

Technology was also mentioned as a way to assess students that was not so time-consuming. One teacher verbalized the sentiment of the others on how technology can help by saying, "A reading level assessment to know where they are is so time-consuming. We must know what to do and what to work on with that child. So you know where to go first." Teachers shared information about technology use that will be helpful to add to the professional development design employed in this study. It was evident these teachers, with years of experience, remained current with technology as a way to improve reading instruction

All the teachers believe there is a need to have formative assessments as a way to assess students on a continuing basis. Crystal added, “Make sure that you don’t miss anything because sometimes they may be shy and they won’t speak up. You think they’re getting it, but then you realize that they don’t.” Crystal further commented on the importance of continuous assessments, “You must look at their assessments to see if they understood each portion.” In the case of ELLs notably, Crystal stated, “They may seem to understand what you’re saying, so you have to analyze what it is they didn’t know and where it went wrong. Was it vocabulary or did they not understand the concept?”

All reading must begin at a starting point, and teachers need to know where that point of departure is through assessment. Teachers believed ongoing formative assessments were critical and should be used throughout the year as a roadmap to move their students, especially vocabulary building strategies in reading instruction, and technology is a way to assist with those evaluations.

In conclusion, the teachers interviewed work in a state that required certification to teach ELL students. The certification required a state exam without prerequisite course work. Test preparation classes are offered but are not mandatory. All of the participants believed the test preparation course covered general teaching strategies for ELL students but did not sufficiently prepare them to teach ELL students, especially in reading. Teachers used their knowledge and experience to teach reading and adjusted their instructional practices to accommodate the needs of ELLs. All of the teachers believed it was necessary to continue to engage in professional development that was specific to learning strategies for ELLs.

Assumptions and Limitations

There was an assumption that the teachers interviewed would be able to share their experiences teaching ELL students in an elementary school. The teachers selected for this study met the criteria and shared their experiences in a general education classroom with ELL students. However, not all of the ELLs in the classrooms mentioned by the participants were Hispanic. One teacher said 86% of her current ELL population is comprised of refugee children from Myanmar (Burma), and another teacher has a predominately Hebrew community in her class. One teacher who teaches in the suburbs has ELL students from various backgrounds including East India, China, and the Philippines, as well as Hispanics in her classroom. It was challenging for that teacher who had children in the class who had little English and were speakers of other languages. Teachers who had Hispanic students found it easier to bridge the language barrier because of their ability to speak or understand at least some Spanish, or they had resources more readily available to them to work with Spanish-speaking students.

The limitation of this study was that it focused on Hispanic ELLs and not all ELL students. The literature review centered specifically on Hispanic ELL students because the district in this study has a 64% Hispanic population. The data collected focused on the teachers' perception of Hispanic students. Also, the teachers interviewed were from other districts in a large metropolitan city and shared a diversity in their classrooms unlike the HS feeder pattern which is predominately Hispanic.

Conclusion

The procedures established in this qualitative study were explained in this research methodology Section. A criterion was set for the purposeful selection of 12 reading teachers with at least 3 years teaching experience in an ELL environment. Fifteen teachers responded to an invitation sent to former professional associates to participate in an interview. Three teachers did not meet the full criteria, and another teacher was selected when a participant who had agreed to the study had to discontinue the process for personal family reasons. The participants were those who teach English reading instruction to ELL students outside the school district in this study. The teachers interviewed were from districts in a large metropolitan city and shared diversity in their classrooms that are not found in the HS feeder pattern that has a high population of Hispanic ELL students. The reading teachers were from 10 different districts and participated in an individual interview.

Each audiotaped interview was analyzed and was coded manually to determine themes without the assistance of computer software. According to Yin (2014), computer software is only used as an aid because it is the researcher who identifies the patterns from the data collected and ascribes possible meanings to label what the respondents may have in common. I created the interview questions informed by the literature review that I thought would best address the research questions. Analyzing the data early in the process helped to guide the search as themes began to arise from the information collected in each interview. Merriam (2009) stated it is vital that a system for organizing and managing data be well thought out before gathering the information. I made a matrix

after determining the themes and added the participants' responses into the columns to have another visual display of the data.

After each interview, the process of rereading the entire transcriptions brought new insights from the perspective of the participants influenced by the ELL population they serve. New themes required reassessing codes or categorizing the data. I read through each interview in its entirety several times to determine possible categories or themes. Coding and notating the data to construct a detailed descriptive analysis was necessary as new codes emerged from the data (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtel, 2010).

There were familiar categories based on the interview questions that were anticipated to explore the teachers' perceptions of their knowledge and preparedness to teach English reading instruction and of the instructional resources they perceived as necessary. The themes were coded to determine categories from the units of data collected from the participants' responses that enlightened the purpose of the qualitative study. The coding taken from the transcripts was to define and interpret relevant codes to determine any meaningful patterns or themes (Yin, 2014). The common themes identified were: a safe classroom environment, oral language proficiency, vocabulary, and the frequent use of technology.

The research outcomes explained in Section 2 detailed the findings as a result of the responses from the participants. A professional development plan is proposed to address the need for more training and ongoing professional development specific for reading teachers of ELLs. All of the teachers believed it was necessary to have continued in-service professional development to teach reading effectively.

In the next section, I will describe the project design for staff training in the culturally responsive approach to reading instruction presented to literacy coaches and volunteer teacher leaders in the HS feeder pattern. The topics in the professional development were selected based on the responses from the participants regarding a positive classroom environment, teaching strategies to build oral language proficiency, vocabulary building and the use of technology. These major themes will be incorporated into two primary outcomes expressed in the research findings to provide a professional development conducted during August for 3 days. There are 2 half days planned for October and January as a follow up during school hours. The description, goals and implementation of the professional development will be described in detail in Section 3.

A brief literature review about the genre I selected will expound on the elements for effective professional development. The topics covered in the professional development presentation will address the responses from the participants on building relationships through culturally responsive teaching, and reading instruction using the balanced literary approach.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

The research findings led to a professional development (PD) project. The analyzed findings from the qualitative study provided the content focus for the PD to further benefit reading instruction of ELL students. The literature review of effective PD further supported the proposed PD plan with multiple sessions over a 3-day period. In this section, I describe the implementation and goals of the study, as well as existing supports and potential barriers to project development. The teachers and literacy coaches from each campus in the feeder ultimately will fulfill the purposes of the PD on each campus with follow-ups throughout the year.

Rationale

The PD genre was selected based on the findings to address the problem stated in Section 1. The analyzed data and findings showed that teachers received the minimal state-required training to teach ELLs and relied on continued district training. Teachers attended various in-service professional development sessions and depended on classroom experiences to meet the needs of their students. Chingos and Peterson (2011) reported that teachers' effectiveness is related to college degrees or preservice training to a lesser extent than it correlates to on-the-job training and years of experience. A study by Parise and Spillane (2010) indicated that a change in teacher quality is likely when teachers are involved in traditional workshops combined with the on-the-job learning experience. In their study, teachers collaborated to share new ideas, interacted with conversations about their instruction, and learned from observing colleagues.

In my findings, all of the participants emphasized the benefit of most of the professional development they received through their district but expressed that they would like to know more about reading strategies for ELLs. Professional development and ongoing coaching will help teachers reflect on their knowledge and teaching practice from a sociocultural perspective (Shokouhi, Moghimi, & Hosseinzadeh, 2015). Moreover, the proposed project is aligned with district plans to increase staff development opportunities to increase teachers' capacity beginning in the summer of 2016.

Review of the Literature

A literature review of PD models was used to inform a design for teacher training in using balanced literacy and differentiation to sustain a culturally relevant classroom environment. This PD was designed to assist teachers in understanding a culturally responsive approach to instructional practices that would help them implement reading instruction for ELLs in the general education classroom. For the literature search, I used Google Scholar and the Walden University Library databases, including ERIC, Education Search Complete, ProQuest, SAGE, and EBSCO. The keywords used were *professional development, coaching, balanced literacy*, and *cultural responsiveness.*

Conceptual Framework

The framework used in producing this project involved a focus on the adult learner. In his book *The Adult Learner* (2011), Knowles described adult learners as those who need to know why they must learn a topic and will assume responsibility for their decisions about learning. Adults have a readiness to learn information about real-life situations. Teachers respond positively to training based on authentic experiences

(Townsend, 2015). They respond to internal more than external motivators (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2011) and need training sessions that have a life-centered orientation to learning. The teachers bring varied life experiences, which should be explored during training sessions for examples of real-life situations. Furthermore, teachers often want to offer possible solutions to problems that can be implemented by others (Stewart, 2014). Adult learners tend to be problem solvers who respond well to reading case studies and hearing of real-life scenarios (Ambler, 2016; Owens, Pogodzinski, & Hill, 2016) on which that they can have input and provide opinions regarding probable cause and effect. Adult learners should be allowed time to reflect about the presented scenarios as a filter for possible biases they may hold (Ambler, 2016).

The objective of training adult learners is to promote areas of change in their thinking and possibly a change in their practice because effective teachers are essential to student achievement (Fine, Zygoris-Coe, Senokossoff, & Fang, 2011; Lumpe, Czerniak, Haney, & Belyukova, 2012). It is important to inquire about teachers' views during a professional training session because of the relationship between beliefs and assumptions that influence decisions during instructional practice (Farrell & Ives, 2015). Lumpe et al. (2012) found that teachers' convictions and assumptions determined their teaching practices, either consciously or subconsciously, which influenced students' learning (Fine et al., 2011). In adult education environments, teachers' voices and opinions need to be heard, and the trainer acts as a facilitator of learning rather than the only presenter of knowledge. The staff instructor assists the adults in sharing their knowledge and

experiences with others to become more competent in newly acquired skills (Henschke, 2011).

Professional Development

Effective PD has components that researchers (Desimone, 2009; Hill, Beisiegel, & Jacob, 2013; Stewart, 2014) agree must be presented to the adult learner (Henschke, 2011) so that the training is sustainable and is more likely to be implemented in practice. These components include content that is relevant to the teachers' daily practice and a topic in which participants share an interest and can actively participate in discussing. The training should have a duration that allows the participants time to internalize the content and implement the PD in a supported environment. Teachers need time to shift their mindset or belief system to change their behavior in the classroom successfully (Sailor & Price, 2010).

Professional development must provide active, focused, collective participation, be sustained for longer than a day, and be centered on the content and goals of interest to teachers (Desimone & Garet, 2015). Researchers (Owen, Pogodzinski, & Hill, 2016; Stewart, 2014) have agreed that PD must be presented to adult learners with relevance to their daily work so that the training is more likely to be implemented in practice. Further, the PD presentation should be paced to allow time for the participants to internalize the content (Desimone, Smith, & Phillips, 2015) as well as to implement the PD in a supported environment. Teachers need time to shift their mindset or belief system to change their behavior in the classroom (Sailor & Price, 2010) successfully.

There are different models of PD that encompass formal and informal training (Richter et al., 2011). These types of learning opportunities may be available in traditional (formal) workshops or made available through informal school settings such as teacher collaboration, peer coaching, on-the-job training (Jewett & MacPhee, 2012; Powers, Kaniuka, Phillips, & Cain, 2016), and coaching from a content specialist (Sailor, & Price, 2010). The various learning opportunities can have a positive impact on teachers' competency and self-efficacy.

A popular model for PD is the professional learning community (PLC). The success of the model requires commitment from administration and teachers to work toward a common goal in one location. Over time, the integrity of the PLC model has been bastardized, leaving Dufour (2016) dismayed over the misuse of the PLC model, which depends on principals' commitment to be faithful to the tenets of the model. Dufour stated that traditional staff meetings, unproductive book studies, and collaborative teacher meetings with no effect on student achievement had been referred to as PLCs.

While exploring the literature, I found that coaching is becoming more popular as a viable model for developing teacher efficacy (Powers et al., 2016). However, according to a study by Vanderburg and Stephens (2010), there is a need for further research to determine the effectiveness of literacy coaches in improving teachers' instructional practices. The results of the questionnaire administered by Vanderburg and Stephens showed that teachers valued their coaches for helping them to change their performance and self-confidence. Additionally, it is worth noting that the relationship between the teachers and the coaches did not involve evaluations, so coaches were more like peers

than like members of the administration. The coach-teacher relationship might have altered the teachers' perspective if administrative mandates had been carried out by coaches. Vanderburg and Stephens (2010) concluded that there was a dearth of literature on the impact of coaching on teacher performance and student achievement. The researchers further stated that coaching is effective, but most research-based evidence in this area pertains to how coaching has a positive impact on teachers' beliefs and attitudes.

Peer coaching is another practice that can be used to develop teacher capacity. According to Jewett and MacPhee (2012), teachers who engaged in peer coaching found that meeting with a peer offered them freedom from isolation, built their confidence in teaching, and turned conversations toward a student-centered focus. The researchers further stated that peer coaching is beneficial when both parties take an equal part in helping to hone their teaching craft. However, there is a caveat: Peer coaching may be ineffective when members of the faculty are not well matched or when there is too much likeness so that teachers cannot form the critical friendships necessary. It is important that teachers build relationships and find staff members with commonality and willingness to engage in critical conversations (Parker, Kram, & Hall, 2012). Teachers may feel vulnerable if made to team with fellow teachers with whom they have not developed a professional relationship.

Whether teachers are involved in a workshop PD, are involved in a PLC, or are partnered as peer coaches, they must feel comfortable enough to contribute feedback and constructive criticism. Stewart (2014) described the strengths of a PLC and outlined seven principles articulated by Knight (2011) on how to have open discourse in a group

environment. Open, honest conversation with a common goal is required to make a PLC efficient. Teachers must meet regularly with student work and common assessments to determine the next steps in their instruction. In any case, there must be a commitment to the practice by both the administration and the teachers (DuFour, 2016).

Project Description

After receiving approval to conduct the PD from the teaching and learning department, I will facilitate a 3-day training for academic coaches and language arts teachers in a face-to-face group setting. A detailed description and timeline are included in the facilitator's notes (Appendix A). The PD plan includes focused content based on the findings from the research study mentioned in Section 2. The academic coaches and language arts teachers will work collaboratively (Steeg & Lambson, 2015) as campus-based teams to increase their ability to serve ELL students.

This PD has been designed based on the findings of the research study. Participants will engage in observing and discussing teaching practices through video clips, participate in hands-on activities and role play, read articles, and challenge the status quo of traditional PD (Bingham & Hall-Kenyon, 2013). One of the primary purposes of a PD is to change the beliefs and attitudes of teachers (Hill, Beisiegel, & Jacob, 2013; Sailor & Price, 2010). The sessions will allow time to reflect and have active interactions. Teachers will be asked to analyze their thinking and understand the topic with active participation.

Project Goals

The goal of this PD experience is to strengthen teachers' learning capacity in relation to reading instruction for ELLs. The particular PD model selected is designed to increase leadership density by training instructional coaches and volunteer teacher leaders to provide effective reading instruction for students on individual campuses in the feeder pattern used in this study. Through effective PD for campus instructional coaches and volunteer teacher leaders, the train-the-trainer concept (Hill, Beisiegel, & Jacob, 2013) will become a model for instruction. Teachers will be expected to be peer coaches (Jewett & MacPhee, 2012) on their campuses and provide a balanced literacy model for reading instruction.

Over the course of 3 days, I will facilitate the PD as the participants are actively engaged in activities specific to their content. Teachers will create minilessons and model those lessons with feedback from other teachers (Stewart, 2014). Teachers will build their knowledge and skill in understanding balanced literacy and the components of differentiated instruction by engaging and applying differentiated instruction strategies through role playing and modeling a lesson. During a cooperative learning exercise, teachers will give feedback about the overall training, along with an individual evaluation form that they will complete at the end of each day.

Potential Resources and Existing Supports

There is a venue in place for this 3-day PD planned for a summer teacher academy held in August. Additional training will be held for 2 half days in October and January as follow-up sessions with academic coaches and participating teachers.

Teachers will be able to register for the training through the district and attend the sessions at the teacher training center. Arrangements will be made to reserve a training room with the head of the PD department. A request to have this 3-day staff training added to the list of training options, with a scheduled time and date, will be made through the teacher training department. The PD staff will supply the usual training materials needed, such as a projector and screen. I will provide the additional materials that are listed on the facilitator's notes for the specific exercises, such as mentor texts and materials for activities.

Potential Barriers

It may be too late to have this training planned for the August summer courses. If that is the case, I will request to use a room at the training center at a later date and time. If an alternative location is necessary, it may be possible to conduct this training at a campus facility for the coaches and teachers in the HS feeder pattern.

Another potential barrier is the time commitment required of volunteer teacher leaders and academic coaches, which may prevent them from attending the 3-day training. If necessary, it is possible to break down the training into smaller modules and present the training according to the availability of the teacher leaders and the academic coaches.

Proposal for Implementation and Timetable

When the teaching and learning department approves the implementation of the PD for the August training, I will facilitate the 3-day PD for academic coaches and language arts teachers in a face-to-face group setting. A detailed description and a

timeline are included in the facilitator's notes (Appendix A). The PD plan includes focused content based on the findings from the research study mentioned in Section 2. The academic coaches and language arts teachers will work collaboratively (Steeg & Lambson, 2015) as campus-based teams to increase their ability to serve ELL students. Over the course of 3 days, the PD topics will include culturally responsive teaching, balanced literacy, and differentiation.

During the first day, the PD will focus on building collaborative teams using peer coaching (Jewett & MacPhee, 2012) as a model. Teachers and coaches will define culture responsiveness and will explore their beliefs and attitudes toward building relationships with their students and their colleagues on campus. On Days 2 and 3, the PD will emphasize the strategies used in balanced literacy and differentiation. Balanced literacy is a way to encompass district mandates and teachers' concerns about how to implement literacy training.

As the facilitator, I will seek approval from the teaching and learning department and deliver the presentation at the Teacher Academy. If the training is approved, the topic will be listed among training options for teachers at the Teacher Academy. I will be the primary presenter and will be responsible for securing all materials necessary for the presentation.

The role of the participants, academic coaches, and reading teachers will be to attend the 3-day training and follow through with the goals of peer coaching on their campus. The catalog description for the PD will describe the training and the time

commitment necessary to have a positive outcome. Ultimately, the training will be offered to increase teachers' ability to promote the advancement of ELL students.

Project Evaluation Plan

At the end of each day, participants will complete the Professional Development Evaluation sheet. Members will give feedback about the workshop by answering five questions on a Likert scale regarding the presentation. Additionally, four comment boxes will provide the participants an opportunity to offer suggestions for improvements, and what the participants found most beneficial about the presentation. Moreover, the comment sheet will allow teachers to reflect on what they can implement following the training.

As the follow-up, coaches will conduct two half-day training sessions on each campus with the participating teachers. The first follow-up training will be in October and the second group session will be in January during regular staff development days already provided on the academic calendar. The participating teachers and coaches will be able to report on the peer-coaching model and discuss the next steps for their particular needs.

Project Implications

The peer coaching PD model duplicated in other school districts with a large population of the ELL students can make a positive social change. The teachers and coaches who use the peer-coaching model will be able to lessen the work-related stress (Pietarinen, Pyhältö, Soini & Salmela-Aro, 2013) associated with teachers who feel the professional inadequacy when they lack the knowledge and preparedness to address the

challenges of the teaching environment. The PD will help teachers identify the specific needs of their situation and provide the support for implementation.

Also, the teachers and coaches will be able to engage in conversations with fellow colleagues to work collaboratively to keep students in school and to make a difference in the lives of their students by building positive relationships with their students (Spilt, Hughes, Wu, & Kwok, 2012). The instructional strategies covered in the PD will increase teachers understanding of the needs to close the achievement gap and provide a quality education for all students for a positive social change.

Conclusion

In Section 1, I defined a problem at a large urban school district with an increasing population of ELL students and the low reading scores in the lower elementary grades that persisted into the middle and secondary schools. In Section 2, I shared the findings to the research question: What are the teachers' perceptions of the resources they have to teach ELLs? My results indicated that the participants' knowledge and skill in teaching strategies for ELL students could be improved with more training to reach ELL students, especially in reading. All of the teachers believed it was necessary to continue to engage in professional development that was specific to the needs of ELLs.

In Section 3, I described the selected professional development model and the goals I hope to achieve in training academic coaches and teacher leaders from each campus in the district. A brief literature review explained the rationale for selecting this professional development genre. A complete description of the PD plan, the necessary implementation and goals are described along with the potential outcome. This section

also covered the proposed timetable with the expected supports, possible barriers, and the implications for social change.

In the next Section, I reflect on the entire study with the overall description of the process and my personal growth experience of developing a project study. I will discuss the strengths and limitations of the study and recommend alternative approaches. Also, I will describe what I have gained from the project development and the potential barriers that need to be considered. Further, the next section will provide reveal my insights on being a scholar and research practitioner of social change.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

In this section, I attempt to communicate what I have learned in pursuing a professional development project. Reflecting on the accomplishments involved in any task is important. It is through critical and thoughtful processes that new insights are gained (Zubert-Skerritt & Cendon, 2013), especially in a research experience.

Project Strengths and Limitations

A strength of this project is that it was designed on the basis of findings from a study of teachers' perceptions of resources to meet the needs of a diverse student population. I developed the project with a focus on the importance of teachers' beliefs and attitudes brought to the training based on data collected through interviews with language arts teachers. The PD will be voluntary, will contain the elements of a successful training (Desimone, 2009), and will reflect appreciation for the learning styles of adult learners (Henschke, 2011; Knowles et al., 2011; Vermunt & Endedijk, 2011).

A limitation of this project might be that the follow-up necessary for a long-term, sustainable outcome will rely on the commitment of the participants to continue collaboration and engage in implementing the information presented in the PD (Stewart, 2014). In addition, this project was designed for a particular location and had a small representation of teacher participants.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

This project study approached the problem of the high population of ELLs and the need for more instructional strategies to meet the needs of ELL students. The PD plan is

to have all of the coaches and volunteer teacher participants take part in a 3-day training during the Teacher Academy in early August. An alternative plan is to have the campus coaches trained during the mandatory monthly PD offered through the district, after which the coaches can present the training to the teachers at each location. The alternative PD plan could be considered a train-the-trainer model. The alternative plan will continue to extend the training to the campus in an ongoing, job-embedded process. The limitation of this alternative approach would be that the teachers would not benefit from training alongside the coaches. Training together is intended to build relationships among coaches and teachers in peer coaching.

Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change

Throughout this journey to fulfill a personal goal of earning a doctorate, I have learned that I have a responsibility as a scholar to think critically before expressing an opinion. My voracious desire to read more and to learn more as an educator has also made a positive impact on those around me to make decisions based on research. Reading research articles that are peer-reviewed has become a frequent practice. More importantly, I have learned to disseminate my knowledge to others and to apply new knowledge to my daily practice.

Through the development of this project, I learned to appreciate the use of a systematic approach to understand clearly the ultimate goal of the project and to have a method of evaluation. I have learned the importance of thoroughly planning a project so that the time and energy of the participants might move them toward developing into better teachers.

In my current position, I am responsible for PD both on campus and in partnership with other coaches in the district. A vital element of every PD has been grounded in thoughtful prior planning. While planning each session of this 3-day training, I was careful to consider the targeted audience and constantly thought of the end goal. Developing this project has prepared me to perfect my skill as a project developer by crafting a systematic process that starts with a concept and a step-by-step plan to see the project through to completion.

Traditional PD practices often ended a training session with comments from participants on the effectiveness of the training so that the facilitator could make necessary adjustments to the training. Although this is a valuable component of PD sessions, it is equally useful to assess teachers in the actual application of PD strategies through classroom observation whenever possible. The peer-coaching model planned in this project study will provide for classroom observations.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

The relevance of my work is in the timeliness of the research project study. The current condition of general education classrooms with diverse populations requires all educators to become aware of the need to improve teaching practices. The achievement gap between students in general education classrooms and those students identified as ELLs continues to widen, and teachers must strengthen their capacity to serve a diverse population of students.

Furthermore, the literature review I conducted helped me to understand more about leading productive and ongoing PD, unlike PD sessions in which I have been

involved. Taking my newly gained knowledge about effective PD and disseminating that knowledge by conducting PD sessions in the district will add to the learning community. Additionally, the overall process of conducting this project study has been a valuable experience promoting my professional, educational, and personal growth.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

This project study approached the problem through the lens of teachers' perceptions of the instructional needs of ELL students. The findings that led to the project's development can have a positive impact in changing the manner in which the district conducts PD. Currently, most PD sessions are focused on what to do about the foremost task of teaching students, but there has been little training focused on how to engage in the social context of the ELL population. The social change impact of this project may begin with each teacher's self-awareness about his or her beliefs and attitudes toward a need for social change.

A recommendation for future research is to approach the problem by exploring administrators' perceptions of the instructional needs of ELLs. A perspective that developed in the 1970s that persists today (Neumerski, 2012) is that principals are instructional leaders and set the climate of the environment for teachers and students in the building. A case study on administrators' and instructional coaches' perceptions would add to the study of instructional needs for teaching ELL students. According to Neumerski (2012), the coaching process has been used more often in the last decade in public and charter schools, with little data on its effectiveness. Coaches are responsible

for leading teachers toward improved instructional practices, and there is little research on how this occurs; research has only indicated that it does occur.

Conclusion

The continued growth of Hispanic ELL students in an urban school district requires teachers to be well equipped to serve this particular population. These ELL students perform poorly in reading, based on reports regarding annual tests. In a qualitative study, I conducted interviews to explore teachers' perceptions of the adequacy of resources they receive to improve reading instruction. My findings indicated that teachers received minimal training in teaching ELL students. Teachers stated that they relied on district PD to gain knowledge about reading and learn strategies to improve their skills.

Based on my findings, I designed a 3-day PD to enhance teachers' awareness about cultural responsiveness, balanced literacy, and differentiated instruction. These topics also are aligned with the district's curriculum initiative. Teachers will be able to enroll in the PD through the district's Teacher Academy held in the summer. The training can be a springboard to more campus collaborative work to strengthen teacher capacity.

Also, according to Kunter et al. (2013), it takes a team effort to build the teacher quality that ultimately will make a significant difference in teachers' practice and the achievement of students they serve (Powers, Kaniuka, Phillips, & Cain, 2016). The participants who attend this training will continue the peer coaching they experience during the training and use the model on their campus to foster a collaborative work

environment. Teachers can provide a quality education that children deserve and need in order to lead productive lives as contributors to a better society.

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Appendix A: The Project

Professional Development – Day 1
Culturally Responsive Classrooms

Facilitator: Pualani N. Jackson
Time and Date: August 2016; 8:30-3:30pm
Audience: Language Arts teachers in grades K5

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Objectives:</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">1. To engage participants in a discussion and application of sociocultural pedagogy

2. To engage participants in valuing a culturally responsive classroom environment</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Document(s): Handouts</td></tr>
<tr><td>Materials</td><td>Assessment & Follow-up</td></tr>
<tr><td>I will need:
• Mentor Texts
• Technology
• Handouts
• PowerPoint Presentation
• Evaluation Form

Participants: Academic coaches and Language Arts teachers.

Participants must bring to each meeting: a folder to secure materials, a composition notebook for journaling, and your own technology</td><td>Assessment during Workshop:
Define culturally responsive classrooms components

• What does a culturally responsive classroom look like, sound like, and feel like?

• Why must writing be integrated with all instruction?

Assessment: Formative Outcome
• Use the components of CRT ensure teachers teach literacy using ELL strategies for reading and writing. (ongoing)

Follow-up by Principals & Instructional Leaders (dates): October and January
• culturally responsive classrooms (ongoing and job-embedded)</td></tr>
</table>

Agenda: Handout			
Time	Mins	Description of Instruction	Materials
8:30		Sign-in and Handouts	
8:30	10	Slide 1: Norms and purpose of 3-day training • Share research findings in summary	
8:40	10	Intro and Icebreaker • Participants will create a name tent with grade level and answer the following question o What do you know or think you know about Culturally Responsive Classrooms	• Card Stock Define CRT in picture form on name plate
8:50	20	Slide 2: Constructing a Culturally Responsive Approach	
9:10	20	Break Out Session – Participants response on their design of a culturally responsive classroom environment What is meant by a culturally responsive approach? Why is it important? Ask for volunteers to define it. Are culture and race the same thing? What would it look like, feel like and sound like?	• Chart Paper, markers
9:30	15	Video Clip "Culturally Responsive Pedagogy" Discussion/response to video	• Journal reflection
9:50	25	Kinesthetic Activity: Inner-outer circle o What is the perception of culturally responsive education? Explain the meaning.	
10:20	25	Slide 3: Attitudes and Beliefs Activity o Participants will answer the following questions and table talk o What are your beliefs as an educator? o How do your beliefs fit with cultural relevance? o What does at-risk mean to you?	• Reflects page in Journal • Write response
10:50	30	Video Clip: The classroom environment. Participants will answer the following questions after the video o How does the classroom exemplify the concept of a safe, risk-free environment?	• Notes & Reflect Journal
11:20	10	Reflection – How will you make this approach work in your classroom? Be prepared to group share	• Index Card
11:30		Lunch	
12:30	30	Slide 4: Framing the Writing Workshop	• Index

		Video Clip "I am home" from Freedom Writers Dig-Into Video Clip • What purpose does writing serve for this student? • Based on the type of writing done by the student, what literature pieces would support his growth as a writer? Have participants to respond to questions on index cards. Pull names from baggies to encourage engagement if there are no volunteers	Card
1:00	15	Whole Group Response: Pull a name to have participant read slides. Someone can expound on what is read. Discussion	• Shared responses
1:15	30	Video Clip "Mentor Texts" Dig-Into Video Clip • How does the teacher use reading to support writing? • What can you do to help teach others to incorporate reading and writing together and not as separate activities? • How can teacher leaders help colleagues on campus use ELL strategies to incorporate reading and writing	Turn and Talk
1:45	30	Slide 5: Frame the learning: Engage participants in a mock mini-lesson for writing • Using one of their index cards to spring from, participants will find a line of text that they could add additional thoughts. Where they can share more of their thinking process with writers? • Participants will read "The Keeping Quilt" by Patricia Polacco. • Small group: We will engage in identifying the section of writing where the writer shares more of his inner thoughts. • Reflection: Using the 4 questions provided by text, participants will add thoughts to their own writing • Whole group: Do a think-pair share.	• Mentor text highlighters index card post-its • Journal Reflection
2:15	30	Video Clip: Making students better writers Questions for digging into the video will be written on index cards and placed on different desks. • Notice how many ways teacher highlights very specific strengths • Why does the teacher choose two areas of	• Table Talk

		focus? • How has writer's workshop affected the perception of her own writing? • What does this mean in a culturally diverse classroom?	
2:45	30	Slide 6: Have participants share by modeling one of the sharing activities. • Do varied modeling examples – share how this will be used on individual campuses. • Volunteers will model their mini-lesson using their selected mentor text Reflection: Why is it important for growing writer's to engage in a well-planned Writer's Workshop?	• Author's Chair
3:15	15	Closure Use this time to close training and evaluate this session	

In-Session/Post-Session Notes: What went really well? What needs to change or be re-taught?
• Use exit ticket evaluation handout for immediate feedback on this session. What worked in this presentation? How will information be implemented? What were the areas that can be improved for the next segment of training? *See Professional Development Evaluation Form: Use one form for each day
Objectives: Balanced Literacy Professional Development Day 2
1. To engage participants in a discussion and application of oral language and vocabulary building components of balanced literacy 2. To engage participants in application strategies to build language proficiency and vocabulary using Balanced Literacy
Document(s): Handouts

Materials	Assessment & Follow-up

I will need:	Assessment/CFU during Workshop:
• Chart Paper/Markers • Mentor Texts • Technology Participants: Academic coaches and Language Arts teachers. Bring a folder to secure materials and a composition notebook for journaling	• Balanced literacy integration and components of Writer's Workshop Assessment: Formative • Participants will use the components of balanced literacy and Writer's Workshop to ensure integration of both reading and writing. (ongoing) Follow-up by Principals & Instructional Leaders (dates): October & January Balanced Literacy and Writer's Workshop (ongoing)

Time	Mins	Description of Instruction	Materials
8:00		Sign-in and presentation handouts	
8:30	15	Slide 1 Norms and purpose of learning Review yesterday's learning	
8:45	30	Slide 2: Constructing a Balanced Literacy Approach K-5 Overview of components with sections covered in detail throughout the day	
9:15	15	Kinesthetic Activity: Concept Map Participants will group terms using cutouts of words aligned to balanced literacy	• Vocabulary Terms
9:30	15	Slide 3: Beliefs and Attitudes Activity Participants will answer the following questions and table talk – A teacher's beliefs impact effectiveness	• Notes & Reflections
9:45	30	Gradual Release Video How would using the, "I do it, we do it, you do it together, you do it alone," model change the way you plan your lessons? How do the post-its hold students accountable and push them to think about their own cognition? Beyond shifting the cognitive load, what are the benefits of structuring lessons in this way	• Notes & Reflections page
10:00	30	Close reading article – Jigsaw Understanding the process of reading for	• Index Card

		Gist/Grit/Grist First reading: Gist (scan for meaning) Second reading: Grit (stick to it) Third reading: Grist (struggle with the hard parts) How will the close reading strategy affect your lesson planning? Close reading texts sets	
10:30	10	Break	
10:45	30	Slide 4: Framing the Writing Workshop Video Clip Gretchen Barnebey Dig-Into Video Clip What purpose does writing serve for this student? Based on the type of writing done by the student, what literature pieces would support his growth as a writer? Have participants to respond to questions on index cards. Pull names from baggies to encourage engagement.	• Index Card Participants craft a writing piece first before viewing the video. The title "I am home"
11:15	15	Activity Response: Roll multisided dices or ask for volunteer to read. Someone comment on what is read.	
11:30		Lunch	• Start on time
12:30	15	Video Clip "Mentor Texts" Dig-Into Video Clip How does the teacher use reading to support writing? How coaching help teachers to incorporate reading and writing together and not as separate activities? *Empowering Writers/Readers*	• Turn and Talk
1:00	30	Slide 5: Frame the learning: Engage participants in a mock mini-lesson for writing Using one of their index cards to spring from, participants will find a line of text that they could add additional thoughts to. Where they can share more of their thinking process with writers? Small group: We will engage in identifying the section of writing where the writer shares more of his inner thoughts. Reflection: Using the 4 questions provided by text, participants will add thoughts to their own writing. • Whole group: Do a think-pair share.	• Participants will need copies of mentor text, highlighters, and index card
1:30	10	Break	
1:45		Slide 6: Transition to vocabulary	• Table Talk

		Video Clip: Vocabulary Strategies Questions for digging into the video will be written on index cards and placed on different desks. Notice how many ways did teacher highlights very specific strengths Why does the teacher choose two areas of focus on? How has writer's workshop affected the student's perception of her own writing?	• Model a lesson on vocabulary strategy
2:15	30	Activity: Roll dices and have one of participants share modeling one of the sharing activities. Reflection: Why is it important for growing writer's to engage in a well-planned Writer's Workshop?	• Mediated reflection to address misconceptions
2:45	30	Slide 7: Daily Five as a model to manage balanced literacy and differentiation covered in next session	•
3:30		Closure: Participants would have changed their thinking and created a plan to implement during last 2 days of training. Final training on 3rd day with implementation.	•
In-Session/Post-Session Notes: What went really well? What needs to change or be re-taught?			
Individual participants will fill out the Professional Development Evaluation sheet at the end of each session as an exit ticket on what went well and what changes can be made to make the session better. Create and ready to implement strategies within the first six weeks of school			
Objectives: Differentiated Instruction Professional Development Day 3			
1.To build participants' knowledge and skill in understanding the four components of differentiated instruction: Product, Process, Environment, Assessment 2. To engage participants in the application of differentiated instructional strategies and the continued process of peer-coaching and Campus Collaborative Work (CCW)			
Document(s): Handouts on Google docs staff share drive			
Materials		Assessment & Follow-up	

I will need: • Chart Paper • Highlighters • Mentor Texts Participants will bring a folder to secure materials and a composition notebook for journaling	Assessment during Workshop: • Differentiated instruction and the application of four components • Product, process, environment and assessment Assessment: Formative • Participants will use the components of differentiated instruction to ensure integration of both reading and writing. (ongoing) Follow-up by Principals & Instructional Leaders (dates): October & January Differentiation (ongoing)

Time	Mins	Description of Instruction	Materials
8:00		Sign-in and Handouts on Google docs staff share drive	
8:30	10	Slide 1: Norms • Purpose of session and why; share findings	
8:45	15	Slide 2: Constructing a differentiated approach K-5 What are the components of differentiated instruction?	
9:00	15	Kinesthetic Activity: Concept Map Participants will group terms using cutouts of words aligned to differentiated instruction then group share as others signal which are correct	• Terms • Paddles; agree/disagree
9:15	15	Slide 3: Beliefs and Attitudes Activity Participants will answer the following questions and table talk – A teacher's beliefs impact effectiveness Which one of your beliefs focuses on the components of differentiation?	• Notes & Reflections
9:30	30	Slide 4: Management tool for differentiation Short Video – Daily Five Independent reading; shared reading; listening to reading; vocabulary work; writing How does this management tool integrate the concepts of balanced literacy and differentiation?	• Notes & Reflections page
10:00	20	Read article – Jigsaw	• Index Card

		Understanding the process of differentiation How will the close reading strategy affect your lesson planning?	
10:20	10	Break	Regroup promptly
10:30	15	Regrouping Activity – Inner/outer circle Participants will share their prospective of article read Based on the new information you have learned so far, share your prospective of differentiation	• Large area for movement
10:45	15	Share Whole Group: Roll multisided dices or ask for volunteer to read. Someone can expound on what is read. Discussion	
11:00	15	Video Clip differentiated strategies Dig-Into Video Clip How does the teacher use reading to support writing with differentiation? What can you do to incorporate reading and writing together and not as separate activities?	• Turn and Talk
11:15		Lunch	• Start on time
12:30	15	Slide 5: Frame the learning: Engage in a mock mini-lesson for writing Participants will find a line of text that they could add additional insight. Where they can share more of their thinking process with writers? Small group: We will engage in identifying the section of writing where the writer shares more of his inner thoughts. Reflection: Using the 4 questions provided by text, participants will add thoughts to their own writing. • Whole group: Do a think-pair share.	• Participants will need copies of mentor text, highlighters, and index card
12:45	15	Slide 6: Using differentiation in word work strategies Questions for digging in: Use high quality question stems	• Table Talk
1:00	10	Break – prepare for transition to activity and collaborative planning with campus coach and peer teachers	
1:15	30	Activity – creative feedback Participants will gather in cooperative learning group to share the pluses and deltas of the 3-days of training. On chart paper: a recorder, a timer to give each person a 3 minute time to share, and a leader from the group will guide the group to evaluate if the	• Chart paper • Markers

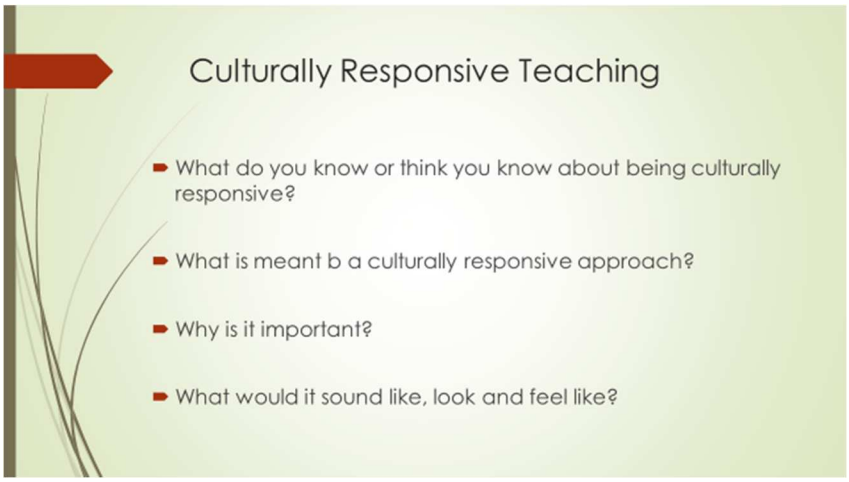
		comment is a plus or delta comment (not a coach). Information will be shared out to whole group in anyway the group would like to display the review	
1:45 2:00	15 60	Whole group – share out creative feedback Give instructions for follow-up activity (ongoing) Planning for Campus Collaborative Work (CCW) Individual campuses will meet together with literacy coach and peer-coaching teachers Literacy coaches responsible for documentation Create plans for CCW work with peer-coaching How will support be given to teachers When will regular meetings occur What data/artifacts will be gathered for discussion	
3:00-3:30 pm		Closure: Share expectation and record plans for CCW on Google docs Note: *If it is not written, it did not happen or probably will not happen*	
In-Session/Post-Session Notes: What went really well? What needs to change or be re-taught?			
• Individual participants will fill out the Professional Development Evaluation sheet after each session as an exit ticket on what went well and what changes can be made to make the session better. • Create a plan and record follow-up (CCW) for the first six weeks of school to collaborate and engage in peer-coaching to foster differentiated instruction.			

Professional Development Presentation Evaluation

Title of this session:	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The session was well planned and organized.				
The facilitator demonstrated understanding and knowledge of the topic.				
The session deepened my understanding of the topic and /or I learned something new.				
The workshop was relevant to my needs.				
I will be able to apply the content and/or strategies of the session in my classroom.				
Please add additional comments below:				
What suggestions do you have to make the content of the presentation more effective?				
What will you take back to your campus or implement in your classroom in the coming weeks? List the first three moves. 1. 2. 3.				

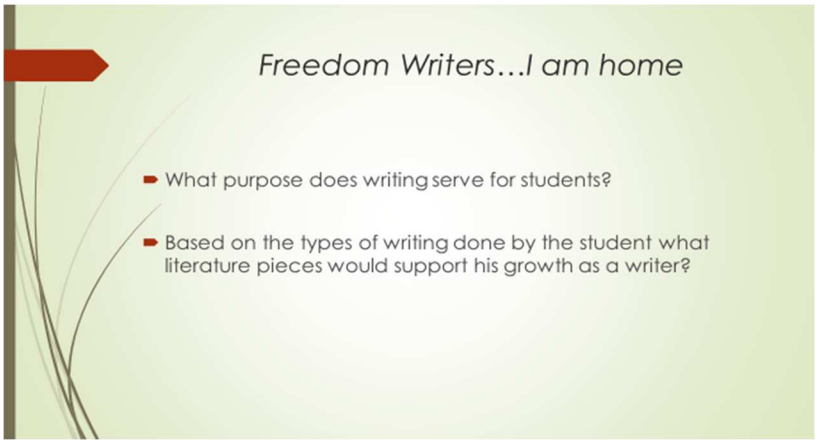

Culturally Responsive Classrooms
Pualani N. Jackson
Professional Development
Summer 2016


Learning objectives for today:
To engage in discussion and application of sociocultural pedagogy
To engage and actively participate in valuing a culturally responsive environment


Culturally Responsive Teaching
What do you know or think you know about being culturally responsive?
What is meant b a culturally responsive approach?
Why is it important?
What would it sound like, look and feel like?

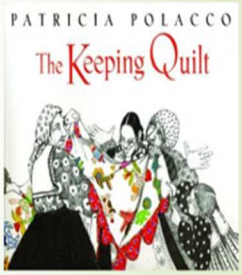

Beliefs and Attitudes
What are your core beliefs as an educator?
How does your beliefs fit with cultural relevance?
What does "at risk" students mean to you?
How will you make this approach work in your classroom?


Culturally Responsive Teaching
What do you know or think you know about being culturally responsive?
What is meant b a culturally responsive approach?
Why is it important?
What would it sound like, look and feel like?


Freedom Writers…I am home
What purpose does writing serve for students?
Based on the types of writing done by the student what literature pieces would support his growth as a writer?

Framing the learning
Mentor Text

- Find a line in the text that you could add additional thought
- Where can you share more of your thinking process as writers?
- Where in the writing does the author share more of her inner thoughts?



Modeling a lesson using mentor texts:
Author's Chair

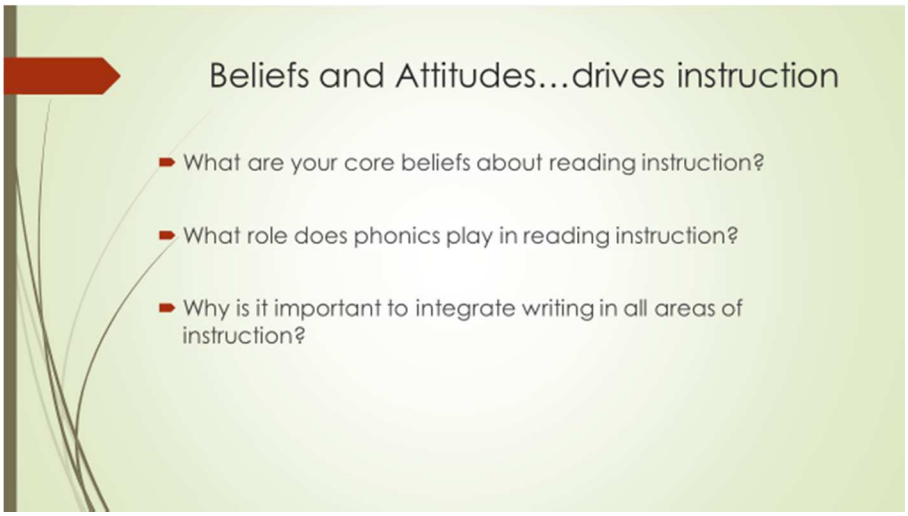
- Show how a mentor text of your choosing will be taught in your classroom
- Create a mini lesson (you may work as a group or alone)
- Volunteers will demonstrate a 3 to 5 minute lesson using a mentor text

Balanced Literacy

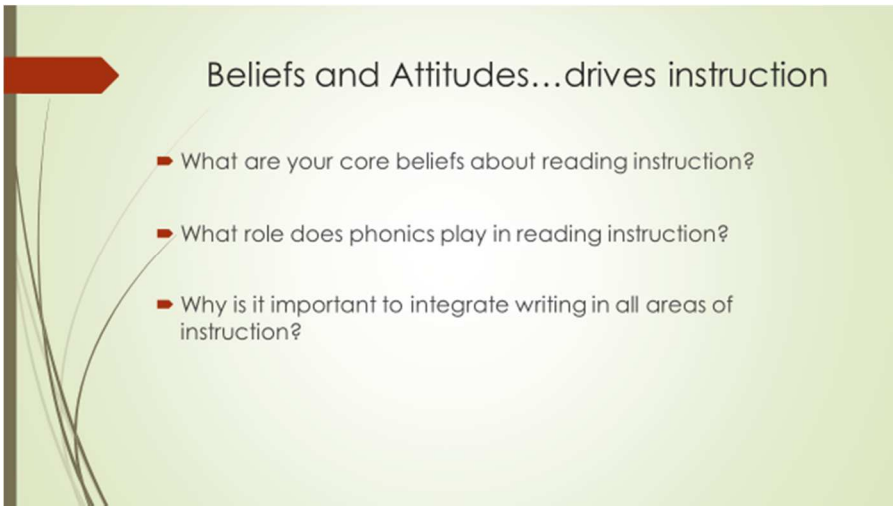
Professional Development
Culturally Responsive Teaching
Day 2


Learning Objectives for today:
To engage in a discussion and application of oral language and vocabulary building components of balanced literacy
To engage in oral language development application strategies to build language proficiency and vocabulary using balance literacy


The Balanced Literacy Approach
Reading
Shared Reading
Interactive Reading
Independent Reading
Read Aloud
Word Study
Writing
Shared Writing
Interactive Writing
Independent Writing
Conference


Beliefs and Attitudes…drives instruction
What are your core beliefs about reading instruction?
What role does phonics play in reading instruction?
Why is it important to integrate writing in all areas of instruction?


Framing the learning: Mini lessons
Gretchen Barnebey "Ba-da-bing"
Model a lesson using the Ba-da-bing strategy
What literature pieces would support the author's growth


Beliefs and Attitudes…drives instruction
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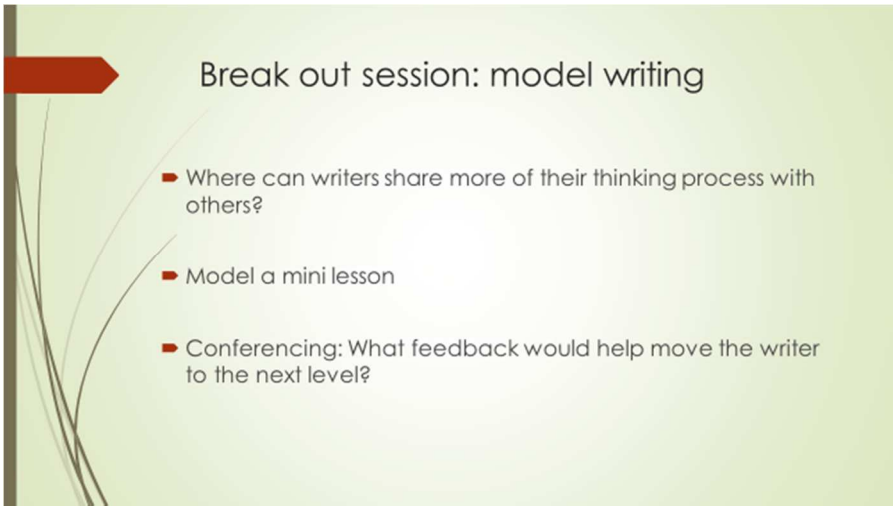
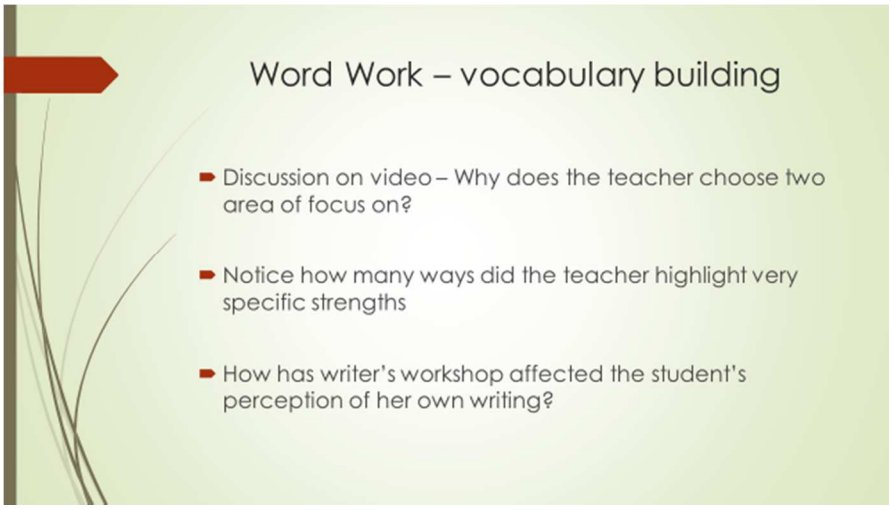
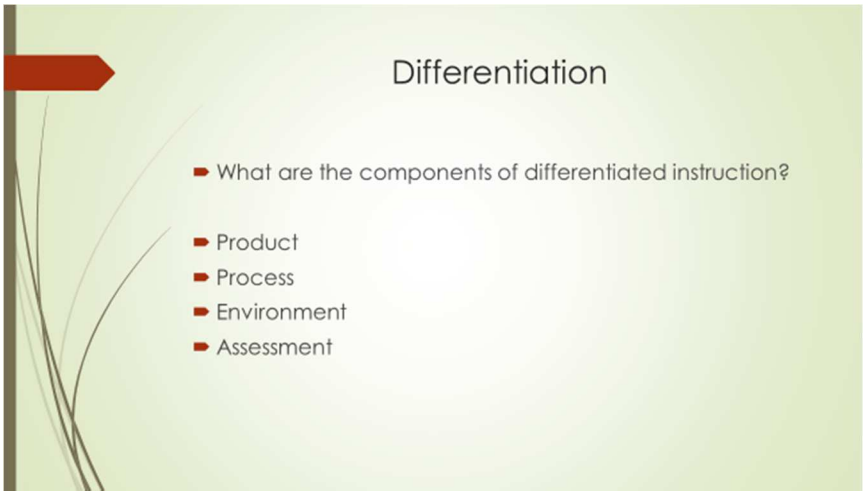
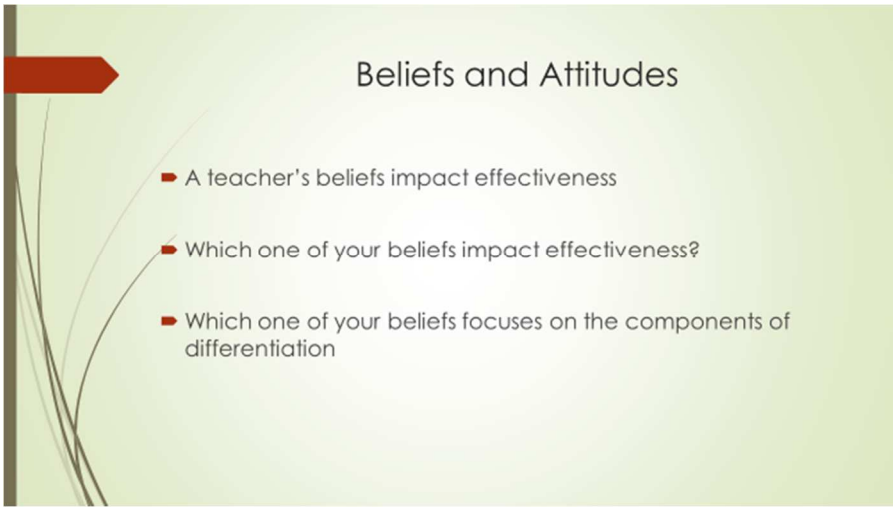

Break out session: model writing
Where can writers share more of their thinking process with others?
Model a mini lesson
Conferencing: What feedback would help move the writer to the next level?

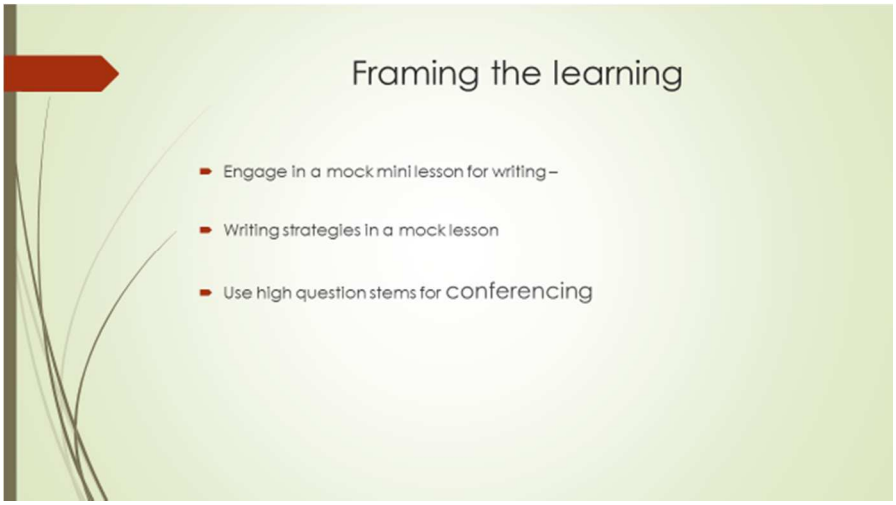

Word Work – vocabulary building
Discussion on video – Why does the teacher choose two area of focus on?
Notice how many ways did the teacher highlight very specific strengths
How has writer's workshop affected the student's perception of her own writing?

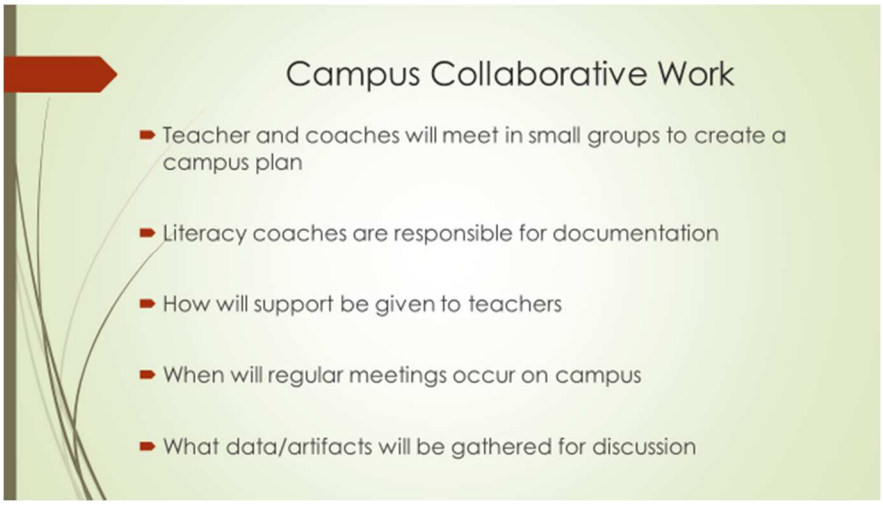

Implementing Daily Five
Ready to Self
Read with Someone
Listen to Reading
Word Work
Work on Writing

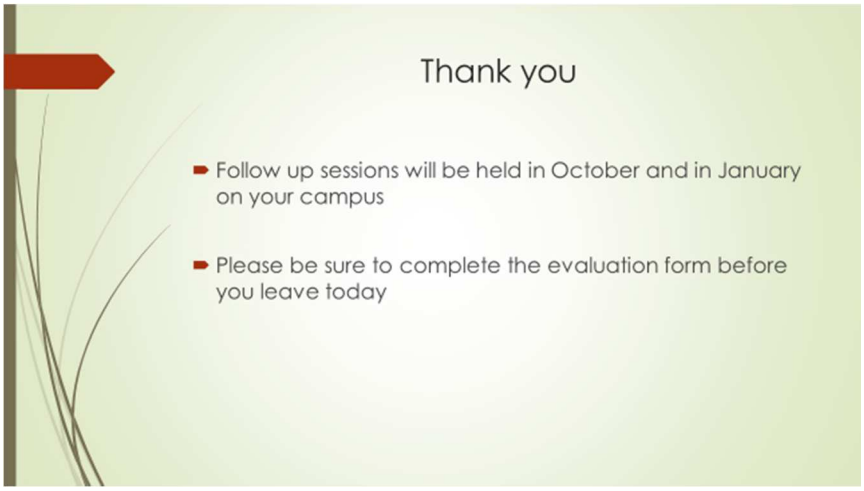

Differentiation
Professional Development
Cultural Responsive Teaching
Session 3


Differentiation
What are the components of differentiated instruction?
Product
Process
Environment
Assessment


Beliefs and Attitudes
A teacher's beliefs impact effectiveness
Which one of your beliefs impact effectiveness?
Which one of your beliefs focuses on the components of differentiation


Framing the learning
Engage in a mock mini lesson for writing –
Writing strategies in a mock lesson
Use high question stems for conferencing


Campus Collaborative Work
Teacher and coaches will meet in small groups to create a campus plan
Literacy coaches are responsible for documentation
How will support be given to teachers
When will regular meetings occur on campus
What data/artifacts will be gathered for discussion


Thank you
Follow up sessions will be held in October and in January on your campus
Please be sure to complete the evaluation form before you leave today

Appendix B: Interview Protocol by Pualani Jackson

Thank you for volunteering your time today. You have been asked to participate in this interview session because of your experience as a certified elementary reading teacher with ELL students. You have signed the informed consent and e-mailed it to me. Do I have your permission to record this interview? Thank you.

Demographics: What degrees do you currently hold and what was your college major? What are your areas of certification? How many years have you been teaching? What is your current teaching assignment?

1. Describe what training or professional development you have had as a reading teacher for ELL students.
2. Describe your perceptions of the optimal learning environment for ELL students.
3. In your opinion what are some of the challenges you find among ELLs?
4. What are some strategies you use to help students overcome these obstacles?
5. How do you use differentiated instruction in your classroom?
6. Describe what methods you use to teach reading comprehension to ELLs.
7. What instructional resources do you think would help improve reading instruction?
8. Is there anything that you would like to add before ending this interview?

Appendix C: Demographics of Participants

Participants	Grade	Degree	Major	Certificate	YRs Exp.
Gail	Third	BA	Sociology	Gen. EC4	4
Erika	First	BA/MA	Interdis Studies; ECE	Bilingual EC4	7
Sara	Kinder	BA	Education	Generalists EC6	32
Crystal	Fourth	BA	Interdis. Studies	Generalists EC6	9
Donna	Kinder	BS	Criminal justice	EC4	15
Alma	Third	BA	Childhood development	EC4	24
Morgan	Fifth	BA	English	EC6	4
Alexis	Third	BA/MA	Education/ Reading	EC8	11
Mia	Kinder	BA	Psychology	Bilingual EC4	7
Kathy	Second	BA	Sociology	EC4	14
Julia	Kinder	BA	Education	Bilingual EC6	26
Beth	Fifth	BA	Interdis Studies	Ec4; 4-8	9